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No. 304 (New Series), Vol. 6. January 15. 1938

Historic Presentation—"WAR MEMOIRS" of DAVID LLOYD GEORGE—*See centre pages*

# The PASSING SHOW 2D.

A.R.V. NELSON-SMITH

Will Scott

6 SHORT STORIES

Lars Moen

LESLIE BERESFORD

# "PLAIN" said candid friends . . but now it's "Pretty!"

NOW ON SALE SIXPENCE *Everywhere*

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YES; it's the same girl—but how different she looks. For a long time she couldn't understand why she lacked that certain "something" that makes the right people pay attention! Then it dawned on her that even the most industrious unskilled use of powder, lipstick and so on is not enough—that beauty is a matter of finding one's type—or creating it—and being true to it in every detail. In other words, an expert job—a matter of "knowing how"! So she let "Woman's Fair" beauty experts take her in hand. They showed her how to make the most of her good points and how to "soft-pedal" the not-so-good. Result, a transformation that's still making her friends marvel—a girl of personality—glamorous . . . attractive!

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# WOMAN'S FAIR

*The Journal of Beauty*

*"Take care of your health by letting me take care of you." — says Mr. Shadforth*

SOUND ADVICE

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DURING the next few months particularly, it is only common sense to take steps for safeguarding your health! Be prepared! Many people suffer needlessly from ailments which can be rectified quite easily. The pain and discomfort which follow normal eating, "nerves," those racking headaches, that "too old at Forty" feeling—be rid of them in 1938! There is a Shadforth remedy for every common ailment—a remedy which has been proved by time to be of the greatest aid. They are reasonably priced and will save you doctors' bills. Go to your chemist to-day, or send direct, and let Shadforth Prescriptions bring you back to health!

**THE SHADFORTH PRESCRIPTIONS PUBLISHED BELOW WILL HELP YOU IN YOUR SEARCH FOR GOOD HEALTH**

*Send Your Order Now!*

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**CONSTIPATION, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHES.**

PERIODICAL bilious attacks, constipation, sick headache and bowel indigestion indicate a sluggish liver, and for this nothing equals this pill. Take it with each meal and you will soon be better. This is a useful formula to keep in the house for family use. Get it now, and prove its worth. It is known as **Shadforth Prescription (No. 2,000).** Prices **6d.** (36), **1/3** (100), **3/-** (300 pills).

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**The New Chest and Lung Tonic.**

One of the latest products of the Shadforth Laboratories, prescribed for common Winter coughs, colds, and chest troubles in adults when asthma and bronchitis are absent.

Gives quick relief and comfort, promotes restful nights; good for aged patients.

When mixed with sugar and water as directed, makes 2 pints of the World's best Chest and Lung Tonic.

**Shadforth Prescription No. 617.**

Price **3/-** per bottle.

**USE THIS SOOTHING, WARMING LUNG TONIC AND STOP THAT COUGH!**

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Keep the body warm by exercise, friction and clothing. Don't live in hot rooms and get warm by going too near fires. Use any or all of the following directions with each:—

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**DELAY IS DANGEROUS**

Shake off Catarrh, and cold in the Nose before they get a real grip on your constitution! Try this famous and reliable remedy, which has worked wonders in thousands of cases. It is the **"Shadforth" Triplex Catarrh Treatment (Prescription No. 331/T),** which penetrates the system, and completely expels all harmful poison naturally and easily. Ask to-day for the Shadforth Triplex Catarrh Treatment. **Prescription No. 331/T.** Prices **2/9** and **4/6.**

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**A Spoonful a Day Keeps the Doctor Away.** The best morning Saline for Biliousness, Constipation, Disordered Stomach, Sluggish Liver, Bladder and Kidney Troubles, Gout, Rheumatism, Feverishness, Obesity, etc. Drink it **first thing every morning.** Tasteless with your Tea,

**For Sparkling Eyes, Clear Complexion, Tip-top Fitness and Joie de Vivre.**

Prices, post free in airtight canisters, **3d., 6d.,** and **1/-.**

*Did Xmas Feasting Give You Pain?*

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**NO MORE GASTRITIS, ACIDITY AND PAIN AFTER EATING**

**Thousands of Sufferers from Acidity, Heartburn, Sour Stomach, Fermentative Dyspepsia, Gastric Catarrh, Wind or Flatulence, Fullness After Meals, and all forms of acid indigestion have been cured by the SHADFORTH ACIDITY PRESCRIPTION No. 1077.**

**POPULARLY KNOWN AS "WHITE LIONS."**

Dispensed after the successful formula used in hospitals and clinics by prominent physicians, they give prompt relief and comfort. This prescription is non-purgative. You feel easier in five minutes. Note the steady improvement; clean tongue; moist mouth and throat; flatulence vanished; long, sour face replaced by such broad sweet smiles that your friends marvel at the magic change.

Prices: **6d.** (24), **1/4** (72), **2/6** (144), **7/-** (432 Lions), with Directions.

**"White Lions" are POSITIVELY the World's Greatest Remedy for Acid Indigestion.**

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**Lower your Blood Pressure and Take a Load Off Your Heart.**

Avoid Blood Pressure Breakdowns! Steady heart action co-ordinated with youth-like elastic arteries are now possible, for those past their prime. The "Shadforth" Simple Home Treatment for Arterio-Sclerosis rapidly reduces high blood pressure and tension. It gives prompt relief from palpitation, giddiness, premonitions of collapse, and sleeplessness; it leads to permanent restoration and makes you feel years younger within 20 days. Get it now. **Prescription No. 1108T.** Prices: **2/6** and **5/6.**

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**Prescription That Always Gives Relief.**

Don't be alarmed because you suffer from symptoms of palpitation or pain near the heart. It may be indigestion or overstrung nerves. **Shadforth Tonic No. 632** (known as "Blue Lion Fox Nuts") will strengthen the nerves, steady the heart, and tone up stomach and kidneys. Don't imagine yourself into an illness; have a good rest, take the prescription, and be normal in a few days. **Ask for Shadforth Prescription No. 632.** Prices: **1/-** (25), **1/9** (50), **2/6** (72), **4/6** (144 pills). This prescription prevents palpitation, faintness, tremblings, run-down conditions, and stops that falling-to-pieces feeling.

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**QUICK RELIEF AND COMFORT.**

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WHEN the days drag, when you know that your vitality is low and life is wearisome—take **"Shadphos"** Tonic Tablets. They will positively revivify the bodily organism and set you free from the fears of mind and body through jaded, worn-out nerves. Every woman would benefit from a course of

**"SHADPHOS" TONIC TABLETS.**

There is nothing like them. They are not a "patent medicine." They are what your doctor would advise. But what a difference they make! In place of lassitude—pulsating life. In place of depression—bright, buoyant spirits. In place of despondency and despair a new fresh outlook that will mean everything to you.

**Equally good for Men,** and all for a few shillings. Ask for "Shadphos" Tonic Tablets **(Prescription 470).**

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## ECZEMA

For dry, wet or scaly eczema an approved remedy is found in **Eczema Ointment (No. 1369).** It is also excellent for Dandruff or Scurf. Prices **6d., 1/-** and **1/9.**

Special New Formula for Vesicular Eczema **(No. 792N).** Price **2/6.**

*Booklet on Eczema Treatment (No. P.S.272) free on request.*

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**WHY THOSE DISTURBED NIGHTS?**

It must not go on. Bladder troubles can be relieved. Quickly. Surely. And during the day—whilst you are employed—this soothing work will proceed. Until you have tried **"Shadforters"** you may be enduring endless suffering and misery—mental as well as physical. **"Shadforters"** will help you. And there is not an ingredient in them that can do you the slightest harm. Cooling, cleansing, healing **"Shadforters"**—for many years known as Shadforth Brand Bladder Comforters. **Prescription No. 285**—have been the successful remedy for Cystitis, Prostatitis, Gravel, Gall Stones, Scalding and associated Liver, Kidney, Uric Acid and Bladder troubles. Try them to-night. Ask for **"Shadforters."** Prices **1/4** (25), **2/6** (50), **4/6** (100), **13/-** (300).

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**HEADACHE—SCIATICA—INFLUENZA**

All Nerve Pains, including those of Neuralgia, Colds, Influenza, Headache, Sciatica, Neuritis, etc., are promptly relieved by **"Shadspro" Compound,** the new pain-killer **(No. 263).** This formula is non-purgative and does not upset the stomach. It quickly relieves pain and renders movement possible. It reduces inflammation and temperature, and kills bacteria. **Prices 6d.** (10), **1/3** (25), **2/-** (50), **3/6** (100 tablets).

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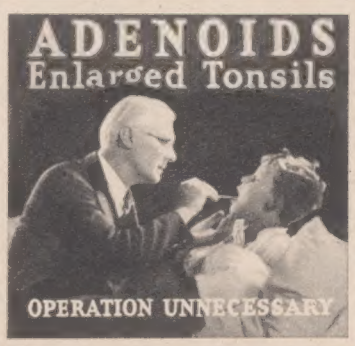
**100 P.C. PURITY. 100 P.C. VITALITY.**

HERE is the Shadforth known, admitted and approved remedy for blood troubles. It eliminates rheumatic tendencies and soothes painful parts. It heals ulcers, sores, boils, eczema, and skin disfigurements. It renews the blood, and blood is life. Ask for **Shadforth Blood Purifying Tablets (No. 1262).** Prices: **2/6, 4/6** and **13/-.**




**YOU CAN CURE YOUR CHILD**

without the surgeon's knife or the loss of one drop of blood by means of the **"SHADFORTH" KNIFELESS TREATMENT FOR ADENOIDS AND ENLARGED TONSILS.** This most successful treatment has been drawn up by a distinguished doctor, and it can be carried out easily at home, and in any part of the world. It is claimed to be one of the most recent advances of medical treatment; it has saved hundreds of operations, and costs only **7/6,** with full directions. Ask for the **"Shadforth" Treatment for Enlarged Tonsils and Adenoids (No. 331/TAD). Septic Tonsils and Nasal Obstruction in Adults are** also conquered without operation, pain, or loss of blood.

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**SHADFORTH PRESCRIPTION SERVICE LTD**

*DISPENSING CHEMISTS,*

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**63, Grove Road, Bow, E.3; 409, Barking Road, East Ham (Opp. Town Hall); 216, High Street, Walthamstow, E.17 and Branches**

# *Have you the* Resistance *to face the Winter?*

## 'Ovaltine' *will give it to you as nothing else can*

FITNESS of body and mind, and freedom from ill-health, depend on your powers of resistance. If you take care to build up your natural resistance to the highest level, you can enjoy robust health through the Winter.

For building up resistance and vitality you need, above everything else, the right kind of nourishment—vitamins, mineral salts and tissue-building food elements. Moreover, these protective food substances must be in their natural form in order to be properly dealt with by the digestion.

The best way to ensure a supply of the right kind of nourishment in easily digestible form is to drink delicious 'Ovaltine' every day. There is nothing like 'Ovaltine' for conveying a wealth of fortifying nourishment to every cell and tissue of the body, brain and nerves.

'Ovaltine' is prepared by scientific processes which cannot be copied, and is extracted and concentrated from Nature's finest foods—malt, milk and eggs from the world-famous 'Ovaltine' farms. It contains in rich amounts all the protective and restorative food elements needed by the body to build up the strongest resistance to Winter ills.

'Ovaltine' is without equal for keeping the whole family well. Although imitations are made to look like 'Ovaltine,' there are extremely important differences.

***'Ovaltine' does not contain any Household Sugar. Furthermore, it does not contain Starch. Nor does it contain Chocolate or a large percentage of Cocoa.***

Delicious 'Ovaltine' is supreme for health and vitality. Make it your daily beverage.

## *Drink* 'OVALTINE' *—and note the Difference*

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*Prices in Gt. Britain and N. Ireland, 1/1, 1/10 and 3/3 per tin.*

*Eventually —why not NOW?*

*The PASSING SHOW*
No. 304 Vol. 6. JANUARY 15, 1938

Henry went back and picked a quarrel with a man who looked important. As a quarrel it was a classic

# YEARS ON THE AVENUE

**From the time when she was sheltered by a double row of trees to the day of her final disgrace, the heroine of this story never really lost her pride of place**

## BY WILL SCOTT

ILLUSTRATED BY ROWLAND HILDER

IN the year 1904 there was nothing on the Avenue but the Cottage, which had been there since Oliver Cromwell, and Mr. Pastor's house, which has been there since Mr. Pastor. The Avenue wasn't a street at all in those days. It was just a double line of trees, leading from the Cottage, which stood near the edge of the low and sloping cliffs, to Mr. Pastor's house. They called it the Avenue because it *was* an avenue. But it wasn't a street. Not then.

Mr. Pastor was lately dead, leaving the house, fifty years old and already mellow, a fair amount of money and a son, Henry, who was prepared to live in the house, on the fair amount of money, and call it a very good world.

You couldn't have found a more delightful place in a day's march. The town was a mile away, and in any case nobody ever came there except in August. Rolling farmlands, the flat sea, the Cottage at the end of the Avenue, the inn at the bottom of the hill: it was a picture. It was just the kind of picture for the eyes of Henry Pastor who, at thirty-five, was satisfied to settle down into something like a squire without a manor and other unnecessary responsibilities, going occasionally up to London and every night to the inn at the bottom of the hill, humming the tunes from *The Cingalee* and *The Catch of the Season*, and refusing to take seriously such nonsense as the capers of Wilbur and Orville Wright.

He had already a notion of marrying at forty, buying a good bit more land than he possessed and founding a "house." *The* Pastors. . . .

Oh yes, a very good world. A world, as far as his eye could see, which might have been made for Mr. Henry Pastor.

In spite of all which, Henry was a good sort and a fine fellow. A little older than his years, perhaps; easy-going and slow to move. He had been born and brought up in a small town, liked it and asked for nothing more. He had a word for everybody and everybody liked him. Many a real manor has had many a worse squire.

Marry at forty, three children, the best carriage in the district, dinners and parties, live to be eighty. That was the plan he had, vaguely, in mind.

And then, one bright morning, *the board* appeared.

BOON HOUSES ARE A BOON!

"My God!" exclaimed Henry Pastor. "What is *this*?"

It was twelve feet high, bright yellow with blue letters, and all over the field behind it men were driving in little pegs. Henry Pastor couldn't quite take it in. It was like having a man you had never seen in your life walk into your house and make himself comfortable by your fireside. A man, moreover, who kept his hat on, dropped his aitches, put his feet on your table and scattered ash all over your carpet. It was *invasion*.

He wanted to tell the men they couldn't do it. Not *there*. But unfortunately they were doing it.

Henry walked to the end of the Avenue, where the old man who lived in the Cottage was leaning over his gate, smoking a pipe.

"What's all this, John?" said Henry.

"Building, sir," said the old man.

"*Building?*"

"I only heard about it last night, sir. A Mr. Boon it is, sir. From London. A very live man, they say."

"Live?" Henry snorted and bellowed "Why?" A subtlety which was lost on the old man. "Building *what*?" asked Henry.

"Houses," said the old man. "Dozens of them."

"Dozens?"

"A regular garden city, so I've heard. They say this will be the coming place."

"Well, my God!" said Henry, and went back to the pegging operation and picked a quarrel with a cigared man who looked important and who was important, being in fact *the* Mr. Boon of Boon Houses.

As a quarrel it was a classic. Mr. Pastor gave Mr. Boon clearly to understand that he was a jerry-building scoundrel and a ravisher of God's fair earth. Mr. Boon gave Mr. Pastor clearly to understand that his mind was way back in the days of the Pilgrim Fathers, but that such as he had never hindered real progress and never could. And he finished up with giving Mr. Pastor a rough idea of the rateable value of the district in twenty years' time, turning his back on Mr. Pastor and shouting an order to the peggers.

*Shouting* . . .

"Well, my God!" said Mr. Pastor.

He went back to his own house, to Pastor's, the house that has been his cradle and was to have been the cradle of his line, the Manor he had built his plans about. Pastor's. The middle of a garden suburb. Rateable value. Streets. BOON HOUSES ARE A BOON. So much down and pay till you die. The lout had even threatened buses from the town to the end of the Avenue.

If Mr. Pastor had been a woman he would have burst into tears. As it was he wanted to throw Mr. Boon into a horse-pond and smash something. This was tragedy. This was the end of everything. He

## *Continuing* Years On The Avenue

by Will Scott

walked in his beloved garden and looked at his beloved house and wondered how much he could get for it. He had once had an offer of five thousand pounds and had laughed at it. Now he was beginning to believe he would never laugh again.

For some days he did nothing but stare out of his windows at the sacrilege. He had a sort of hope that Boon Houses might go bankrupt and fade away overnight. But Boon Houses didn't. Boon Houses began to go up; brick by brick, floor by floor. Soon Boon Houses would be actually occupied by Boonites. Henry could stand it no longer. He went down into the town one morning and put the old house on the market.

It read, in the newspapers and in the circulars, very well indeed. Actually a *desirable* residence. Quite a number of people came out to see it at once. The trouble was, they saw the Boon Houses as well and their interest evaporated.

"Well, of course, we couldn't live here with *those* places all round . . ."

Henry dropped the price to four thousand, to three, then to two thousand five hundred. But nothing happened.

And one day he found a new road being made down to the inn at the bottom of the hill, and a new wing being built on the inn itself; and he told himself he was ready to die. The end of the House of Pastor.

Then the Mr. Boon had himself shown in, cigar on and very hearty. The Mr. Boon explained that he wasn't a one for animosity, offered a cigar (which was declined) pointed out that this was the very place he had been looking for, and what about two thousand, spot cash, down, *now*?

When the second classic quarrel had worn itself out, Mr. Pastor bowed to the inevitable, took the two thousand, pulled up the roots which had been established for two generations and went away. Far away.

And was forgotten . . .

Late that summer the Boonites began to arrive, Miss Purchase, at Myholme, being the first. If you hadn't the Pastor outlook you had to admit that the Boonites were very nice people, with a nice bit of money, who never went up to town (those that *had* to go up to town) by a train earlier than the nine-fifty. And all the Boonite men wore spats in the winter-time and never unrolled their umbrellas. And they all joined the Constitutional Club, and all the women joined the Primrose League, and all the children took music lessons. A *real asset*. You had to admit it.

And, again if you hadn't the Pastor outlook, you had to admit that the Boon Houses *were* a Boon. They were important-looking and cheerful, with biggish, gay gardens and mostly French names, and on a sunny day they made the landscape quite lively. And lots of people who could not afford to live in them used to walk out, Sunday afternoons, just to stare at them and envy the men with rolled-up umbrellas.

Boon Park, that was what they called it. And just *living* in Boon Park made you good for credit.

"The Avenue, Boon Park? Yes, madam, I know. I'll send it up immediately, madam. Thank you, madam. Much obliged. Good morning, madam."

Pastor's (the old house kept its name) and the beginning of Boon Park were the beginning of life for Mr. Boon. Until that time he had never lived. He had only worked and slept. But there were other Boon Parks in other towns, with managers to do all the worrying. The money was rolling in. Mr. Boon began to think of Eton for the boy. The boy being ten months old.

1904 and 1905 and on . . .

Looking back, when the years had passed, those early days seemed like a far-away fairyland to Mr. Boon. A fairyland without winter weather, without ills, without troubles, where everybody was young, or youngish, with plenty of money and sang *My Irish Molly* and hummed the *Merry Widow Waltz* and talked about Camille Clifford and the Franco-British Exhibition that was beginning to go up at Shepherd's Bush. He forgot, as the years passed, that day on the Dogger Bank and the Russo-Japanese War and the earthquakes here and the threats of rising there; the assassinations in Portugal and the suffragettes and Jim Larkin and the trouble in Ireland and the wet summers and all the other things. He forgot the ogres and remembered only the fairies. Being very much like the rest of us.

Those were, in his own words then and later, the days. Life was worth living then. You had time.

Mr. Boon never really rcovered from Pastor's and the change that it brought to him. He had expected (if he had ever stopped for a second to expect anything) to go on being Mr. Boon of Boon Houses to the end of his days, leaving behind a Master Boon who would become in time Boon II and carry on the good work of building Boon Parks all over the map. But Pastor's upset everything. Pastor's and the money that came rolling in to keep things going. There was something about Pastor's that made you toe a line. The wide lawns; the tall trees, the flat, well-behaved walls and the fanlight over the main porch; the broad staircase and the high rooms. Pastor's made you realise . . .

Being in the middle of Boon Park didn't spoil things at all. Not for Mr. Boon. Not a bit. It only helped. Boon Houses were very nice. They were the best value of the kind you could get anywhere. But Myholme was rather like Sans Souci and the hundred others; whereas Pastor's stood alone. Pastor's was the only one and everybody else knew it and inclined their heads respectfully when you went out through your front gate. Gates, rather; *double* gates with pillars. And a drive beyond.

It was a bit like being a king.

And to think it had come his way, as it were, by accident. . . .

Mr. Boon stopped one day at the side of the pram, where it stood under a tree on the lawn in the care of Mrs. Boon and a nursemaid. He smiled down at the boy.

"Lucky kid!" thought Mr. Boon. "Damn lucky kid, if he only knew. He'll realise, later on." He glanced across at the house and lit a cigar. "We're all damn lucky," he thought. "I reckon this will suit us for ever. All of us."

And so things went on, with scarcely any difference at all, at first. The boy talked and then walked and presently went into trousers. Mr. Boon began to get a little plumper, without noticing. He began to get a little thinner on top, although he *did* notice that.

He whistled the *Count of Luxembourg* in place of the *Merry Widow*. He whistled the *Sunshine Girl* in place of the *Count of Luxembourg*. And then *Everybody's Doing It*. And *Gilbert the Filbert*.

And then, all through one winter, *Tipperary* . . .

Which started it, as he always believed.

Mr. Boon afterwards blamed everything on the war. Being, in this respect too, very much like the rest of us. For four years he thought of the war as a kind of enormous interruption of placid Boonery, and he never quite got used to the idea that perhaps it wasn't. He whistled *Keep the Home Fires Burning*, and later he whistled *Roses in Picardy*. But he always had a hazy notion that it was all just for the time being; that when it was over and done with he would go back and whistle *Gilbert the Filbert* again. The boy was eleven when war broke out; fifteen when all was over. But Mr. Boon had more than half an idea that by some miracle he would go back to eleven again and they'd start together where they left off. The boy, of course, didn't. He went on to sixteen. And Mr. Boon went on to whistling jazz and wondering what the hell people saw in such muck.

And then everything began to happen at once.

The boy came home from school one day and flatly told (didn't ask) Mr. Boon to stop that whistling. People *didn't*, he said.

And Mrs. Boon said didn't "the boy" sound rather silly now? After all, he was sixteen and his name *was* Peter.

And the new Peter said that the furniture was all wrong and the things they hung up for pictures were abominations and he'd be ashamed for Stockwell to see them when he came down in the summer. He told Mr. Boon just how the house should be furnished. And Mrs. Boon listened! And nodded her head!

And the man at Sans Souci went bankrupt and Sans Souci fell vacant and stayed vacant. And Miss Purchase, at Myholme, gave up her gardener and furtively cleaned her own windows after dark.

And the whole world—Mr. Boon's world, anyway—seemed to go mad.

Two-servant people now managed with one. Mansions were cut up into stupid little flats; old town houses came down and bare-faced hotels went up in their place. Peers went bankrupt and peeresses opened hat shops.

"I'm lucky," Mr. Boon told himself over and over again. "Everything tumbling to bits and here am I in this lovely old place. Settled. That's worth a lot in these times."

Settled. . . .

Austin sevens, wireless, the Whispering Baritone, a-cha-cha, hoo-yah-hoo-yah-hippp!

"Stark damn mad!" said Mr. Boon. And he thanked heaven for the solidity and permanence of his own old house. The *dignity* of it.

Whoopee!

"It'll wear itself out," Mr. Boon told himself. "Things will come back. And find us here."

One summer's evening (it was in 1925, when he was twenty-two) Peter came home with a vivid American magazine which he pushed in front of his father's spectacles.

"How's that, Pop?" he shouted.

They always called you Pop and shouted. Though *you* weren't allowed to whistle. But the more you argued the more they did it. So what?

Mr. Boon glared at the magazine. It was a picture of what Mr. Boon took to be a cardboard box with prison bars across it.

"What is it?" Mr. Boon asked.

"It's a house," said Peter.

"It's a what?" said Mr. Boon.

"A house," said Peter.

"*House?*"

"Read what it says."

Mr. Boon read what it said.

"Well?" he murmured. "*What?*"

"Time I was doing something, Pop," said Peter.

"How d'you mean—doing something?"

"Working."

Mr. Boon tightened his lips and grabbed a cigar.

"You don't have to work."

"But——"

"You're a Boon. *I* worked, but that's done with. I've made enough for myself, and you, and your children, and your grandchildren——"

"I know all about that," said Peter. "But everybody——"

"You're not everybody."

"I'm one of them."

"Still," said Mr. Boon, who had had similar arguments before *and* won, "*what?* I mean this." He thumped the picture of the cardboard box with the prison bars. "I don't follow you."

"I'm your son, Father," Peter tried to explain. "I shall follow in your steps. Given the capital I could get in with the new sort of home before the rush starts. I could be the first. *You* were the first."

"New sort of home?" Mr. Boon gaped.

"This," said Peter, pointing to the magazine. "They're getting them in America. And Germany. In Vienna——"

"Rush?" said Mr. Boon. "Boy, you're mad!"

Peter flushed.

"All this stuff," he said, striding to the window and sweeping Boon Park out of existence with a gesture, "is done. Finished. In twenty years' time——"

"You mean *Boon Park*?"

"I mean all the places like it. In twenty years' time——"

"Do you mean to tell me, a boy like you——"

"But, Pop, such places are *decaying*. The type's had its day. You'll find the people removing and the places dropping to bits. We ought to get out while the going's good. I know an estate in the market that nobody's got his eye on yet. In twenty years' time——"

So Mr. Boon let him have it. He was young and he was unbalanced like the rest of this damn silly new world, but he wasn't the head of the house yet if he thought he was. There wasn't going to be any getting out. When Mr. Boon settled at Pastor's he *settled*. They were the Boons of Boon Park. At Pastor's he'd stay till they carried him out feet first. And there, when he was older and wiser, Peter would be satisfied to stay too. And all the Boons after him. He, Mr. Boon, might not have started very high up, but they weren't tuppeny-ha'penny any longer. No, my boy. They were the Boons. Of Pastor's. Of Boon Park. *The* Boons. Settled.

"And that's settled too," he finished. "Get it wedged under your hat. I'm not moving from here. Ever."

It ended in a draw. With an early replay implied.

Nineteen twenty six and Wembley. Buildings that were all corners. Shades of the old White City. A Labour Government. . . .

Girls. A girl. *The* girl. A wedding! With Mr Boon feeling a fool in a top hat.

He stared down at the wide lawns with the old trees above them, at the double gates with their pillars at the end of the drive

"My dear," said Mr. Boon to Mrs. Boon, "we're growing old."

"They're going to be very happy," said Mrs. Boon. Which, thought Mr. Boon, wasn't exactly keeping to the point.

So Peter and young Mrs. Peter built themselves a concrete box with prison bars at Maxwell Park at the other end of the town, calling it Wembley Villa, and Mr. and Mrs. Boon were left alone with the servants in the serenity of Pastor's.

"They'll get over it. They're young," said Mr. Boon. "When we've gone the old place will be here waiting for them. They'll be glad to come back. Our grandchildren, yes and our great-grandchildren, will sit in their prams under the trees where Peter sat. I thought about calling it Boon House, but I don't know. It's been Pastor's for a hundred years. A hundred years. . . . There's something about a hundred years. Makes you realise. It's a funny world. I wonder what's coming next?"

The second Labour Government came next. And the Crisis. And empty Boon Houses on the Avenue. People with big cars took to small cars. People with small cars took to walking. Houses that had always been painted every spring now missed a year. And the man at Little Croydon, leaving the Avenue, left bills behind and no address.

Mr. Boon said it was disgraceful.

"I know, my dear," said Mrs. Boon. "But with money so scarce——"

"The Crisis won't *last*," declared Mr. Boon. "That's the one good thing about these wonderful modern times; nothing *does* last. You'll see, money will come back. And then these people will come back to the Avenue."

But they didn't. They went, when the money came back, to the concrete boxes that Peter was building, up at Maxwell Park.

"The houses of the future, Pop," said Peter; "you can say what you like. Why don't you come up and join us?"

"I — am — never — going — to — leave — Pastor's," snapped Mr. Boon. "Got that?"

In the summer of 1936, Miss Purchase, now getting on in years, rose early after a sleepless night spent in wondering what they would say about her. She had been the first to come to the Avenue years ago when Boon Houses wiped out the fields above the sea. Myholme had been the first name painted on a Boon Park gate. She was, you might say, the Oldest Inhabitant. And in her wildest dreams she had never imagined that she would be the first to do *this*; that anybody, indeed, would have to do it.

A little white card, nine inches long . . .

Of course the Avenue wasn't what it had been thirty years ago; everybody knew that. It had sort of faded. It had never really been the same since the war. The class of people who used to live on the Avenue lived now at Maxwell Park, or in other towns altogether. The town itself had gone down a lot. Trippers and Rollball Arcades. And living on the Avenue no longer meant what it used to mean.

"Boon Park? Oh yes, of course. We shall require a deposit. Deliver. Well, I don't know. . . . Not this afternoon, I'm afraid. You'll take it with you? Thank you. Good morning."

No, it wasn't the same, somehow. There were houses on the Avenue that hadn't been occupied for years. And some, actually, were *let*. The people weren't the same, either. Those that had cars had little noisy cars and didn't seem to care anything at all about their gardens. The Avenue had gone down, and you had to recognise the fact.

At the same time—*this*. . . . What *would* they say?

Miss Purchase sighed, long and often. It was a case of let them say, she saw that. Say and get it over, if ever they did. It wasn't her fault that shares had gone down to nothing and the poor, she reminded herself, must live.

So up into the window went the little white card.

APARTMENTS.

(*please turn over*)

## *Continuing* Years On The Avenue — *by* Will Scott

And, blushing, back into the darknesses of Myholme, Miss Purchase retreated.

An old man, near to seventy, stopped on the Avenue and saw Miss Purchase's card. It was July. All over the town people were looking at similar cards in other windows.

The old man seemed surprised to see the card, but at the same time pleased. He went slowly up the path to the door of Myholme. When Miss Purchase appeared, apologetically he mentioned rooms.

Miss Purchase, wearing the kind of smile she had read about, but to which her face was not accustomed, asked the old man in and inquired for how long he might be wanting the rooms.

The old man didn't know. A week, certainly. Perhaps a fortnight. He might remain throughout the summer if he found the place comfortable.

Miss Purchase, thinking, "Well, anyway, a week is something," and wondering, startled, the next moment if she had thought it aloud, displayed her two best rooms and timidly stated her terms.

"I suppose you are really very fortunate," she said, "in getting rooms here at all. You see, it isn't usual to let in the Avenue. We always pride ourselves on being rather . . . well, if you know what I mean."

"I understand perfectly," said the old man.

"It's really the very best part of the town," Miss Purchase added.

To which the old man said nothing.

"Of course," Miss Purchase went on, feeling she had left something out, "these are difficult times, and with all one's investments——"

"I know," the old man agreed. "Yes, I know. Very difficult times. For all of us, I'm afraid."

So they argued over terms for five minutes and came to an understanding. The old man said he would go to the station for his luggage and would be in for tea. And out he went.

When he was gone Miss Purchase realised that she had still a lot to learn. She had not asked the old man's name. She had not asked for a deposit.

"Dear me," said Miss Purchase demurely, "I hope I'm going to make a success of it."

She was certainly making a success of it, had she only known. The people on one side saw the card. The people on the other side saw the old man. Smith told Brown. Or, rather, Mrs. Smith told Mrs. Brown and thus Smith and Brown got to know. The Jones's maid told the daily woman to the Robinsons, who couldn't afford a maid. Wag went the tongues.

The old man did not hurry to the station. He stood a long time on the trim lawn at the edge of the cliff. Once it had been rough turf, honest grassland. He stared at the concrete road which led down to the inn and swept round it in a great curve. In his mind's eye he saw a grass-tangled lane free of all traffic save an occasional slow-moving cart. The inn still bore the name of inn, though it was an inn no longer. Three times the size it had been once upon a time with neon lights across its front and great french windows all round its modern bar.

The old man turned and looked across at the Cottage. It still stood there, with the strange children of strangers playing in its garden. It had been done up by somebody with an Olde Englishe mind. It sold teas.

"No good raking things up," he thought. "Nobody wants to know me. It would be just a nuisance—a lot of people I don't know talking and talking. I doubt if anyone would remember, if I didn't tell them. Nobody *to* remember, possibly . . . It's somewhere to sit and wait. As good as any other place. Now."

He carried his own luggage from the station to the Avenue. An out-porter offered to do it for sixpence, but the old man thanked him politely and was his own porter. In these difficult times sixpence is sixpence.

"I forgot to ask you your name," said Miss Purchase.

"Smith," said Mr. Pastor.

"*Who?*" said Mr. Boon.

"Miss Purchase," said Mrs. Boon.

"Miss *Purchase?*" said Mr. Boon. "Impossible."

He went to the window and looked out.

"She was the first to come," he said. "Thirty years ago and more. The very first. I remember them painting the name on her gate for the first time. I always thought of her as a kind of mascot."

He stared down at the wide lawns with the old trees above them, at the double gates with their pillars at the end of the drive. Pastor's. Where it had always been a bit like being a king. Where the boy had been brought up—Peter. For which the boy had been brought up. From which the boy had gone. Pastor's. There this hundred years. His. Theirs. For ever. That's what he'd always said.

And now For Sale and To Let boards poked the sky along the Avenue and hedges were untrimmed and gates creaked and paint was peeling. Times were difficult, but he had always believed that times would be easy again, that hedges would be trimmed and gates creak no longer.

But *this*!

"A *card?*" he asked.

"Yes, dear."

"In the *window?*"

"Yes, dear."

"And you say there's somebody there already?"

"I've seen him myself. He moved in yesterday. An old man."

"Well, my God!" said Mr. Boon.

Rapidly he added up figures in his head.

"It would cut up," he announced presently, "into ten flats."

"Pastor's?" asked Mrs. Boon timidly.

"Well, what are we talking about?"

"Yes, dear."

"We'd go—Brighton or somewhere. Out of it."

"Peter would like——"

"Do you think," said Mr. Boon, "I'd raise my head within a hundred miles of *this?*"

He waved his hand in a disgusted sweep.

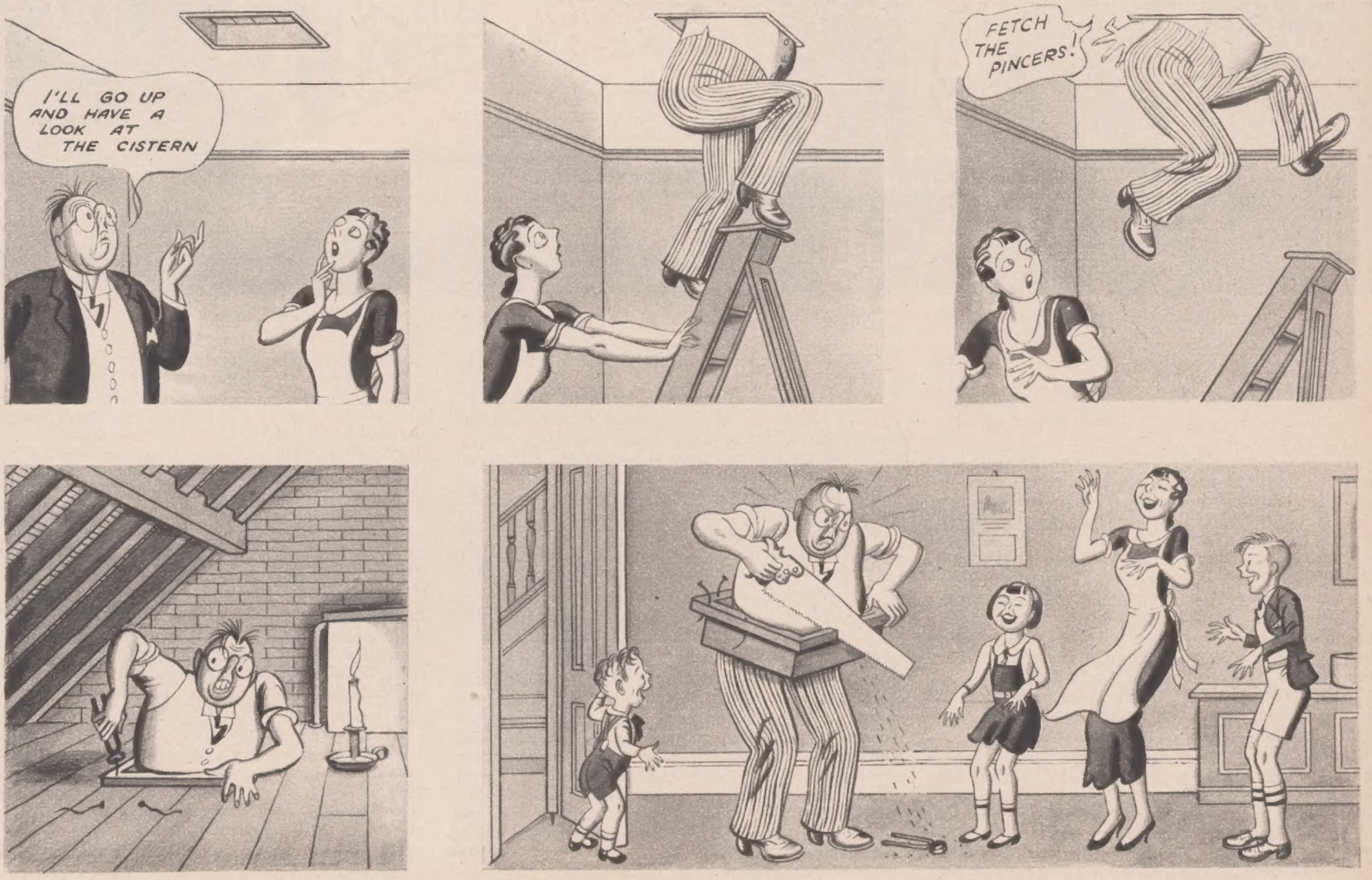
"Lodgers!" he said. "On the Avenue. The Avenue that *I* built. *Lodgers!* Well, my God!"

And he set things astir the next morning, and two weeks later climbed into the Rolls behind Mrs. Boon, and drove down the Avenue for the last time (passing Miss Purchase's lodger on the way,) and went up to Maxwell Park to say good-bye to Peter and Mrs. Peter, and away. Far away.

And is already half-forgotten.

## A MAN IN A FIX

By A. C. BARRETT



# MONEY ON THE RUN

## BY LEWIS D. ESSEX

★ **Not even the most experienced know what goes to make a stage success, but here are a few of the essentials. Still, it will cost £20,000 to make the experiment**

JUST a few weeks ago, a very wealthy young gentleman from the United States, who had abiding faith in the talents of an equally gifted young actress from that Star-spangled land, sorrowfully admitted losing £20,000 on a show in London, which had had to come off, despite the more than extraordinary efforts of the clever little woman and her fellow artistes, to keep it on.

And to bring things much nearer, and more sadly, home, Laddie Cliff—one of the most lovable and shrewdest (rare combination) of Englishmen in the theatre "business"—put his life's savings into his last production, also a failure, before he died.

"He ought to know what to give 'em!" said the "boys." "What's wrong with the thing? What do the public want? Knocked them cold with the same stuff, last time!"

But nobody could say why a play was a flop, or a howling success. Nobody could say definitely where all the money, said to be spent on a failure, went to.

So I sought one of the most outstanding examples of success in the British theatre, to show me the ingredients that have to be mixed to make the play that won't flop.

When you meet Mr. Ivor Novello in his dressing room, you find nothing of the romantic lady novelist's idea of the successful author of three successive Drury Lane "hits." You see a quietly spoken, extremely thoughtful young man.

"And nobody in this world, least of all I, can forecast the success of any play," said Mr. Novello. "In short, nobody does know what the public wants. While a playwright never can learn what to do, he may learn what *not* to do."

"Just a moment, Mr. Novello," said I. "Is it a question of one type of play being more difficult than another? Say, an intellectual highbrow compared with——"

"You may dismiss that attitude completely," interrupted Ivor. "I write both straight plays and musical. If I do both profitably it is because I have a proper respect for each. But, to illumine your point about entertainment value, when I'm writing for the Lane, two prime essentials are never allowed to escape me—story and locale."

"You mean, having regard to Drury Lane tradition, the restricted canvas and sophistry of, shall we say, St. James's Theatre would not do?"

"Precisely," he agreed. "But very much more, infinitely more, besides. On a massive canvas, the appeal *must* be almost as much to the eye as to the ear. And I'm not altogether sure if the eye isn't the more critical. I *am* sure that playwrights too frequently overlook this consideration."

"Doesn't all this mean that the recipe for success in the 'straight' play has fewer ingredients?"

"Making the mixture more difficult!" smiled Mr. Novello. "True, it's story all the time. In fact, the story *is* entertainment value. Useless, therefore, putting the best story in drab or sordid surroundings. Saving the long-haired intellectual, whose place and proper importance I'm not denying, people go to the theatre for a night out. They want brightness, smartness and beauty. That trinity may still encourage them to think."

"Nobody in this world, least of all I, can forecast the success of any play," said Mr. Novello. "In short, nobody does know what the public wants. While a playwright never can learn what to do, he may learn what *not* to do"

"But not even Ivor Novello knows beforehand whether his particular coffer at the bank will be fuller by a nice lot more thousands of pounds. Is that right?"

Ivor nodded as we shook hands.

"Or *emptier!* Don't forget that. It isn't only the author and the producer who stands to lose big sums when he, or they, fail to give the public what it wants. I'm thinking of all my fellow workers in and about the theatre; the great and the humble. Why not try to discover the significance of success or failure to them? You may find where the money goes to, at the same time!"

Novello's parting words reminded me of something I had in mind when I set out on this quest. For, of course, how could you have a musical play without an orchestra? On the other hand, nobody is going to suggest that the orchestra of a modern west end show can be held responsible if the play flops. It is certainly essential to its success.

Now a musician in such an orchestra earns six or seven pounds weekly *while the show is running*. As to rehearsals, he gives one rehearsal free and is paid for one, anything from 12s. 6d. to 17s. 6d. An orchestra may number anything from fifteen to thirty performers.

The leader would get about eight guineas, while the conductor receives £15. In the case of outstanding men this figure would be substantially higher. So taking an average of twenty, £160 weekly would be needed to fill their pay envelopes during a run.

Four pounds a week is average pay for members of the chorus, irrespective of sex. This is at least adequate and as generous as the conditions of the industry will allow. Rehearsals are paid for and even though a show is such a flop that it is taken off in a night, two weeks' notice is essential. Moreover, I have heard it said by those well qualified to speak, that a higher rate would not bring a better quality chorine.

Now, whatever may be the worth of the individual chorine the size of the chorus has no bearing upon success or failure. No more than twenty or thirty sophisticated "exquisites" may be sufficient to keep an intimate revue of the Charlot type running for months. But Mr. C. B. Cochran would almost certainly be horribly unhappy without a hundred, or even more, of his Young Ladies as caviare to the Spectacular.

But, again, to take an average, say, of eighty chorus boys and girls, their weekly cost totals £320.

Come we now to the "stars." Sound the trumpets, twang the lyres! Offsetting the ballyhoo and allowing the publicity to subside, there are infinitely more stars taking £150 a week than £300 and there are not such a lot of the former. Fierce competition, principally from the cinema, has wrought miracles of moderation in the direction of stars "getting together" with the business side of a production.

Announcements appear, looking heroic in print, of stars halving or shedding salaries to keep a shaky show on its legs. In the "business," this practice is condemned on all sides for many reasons, one being that it rarely succeeds and often prevents or delays the opening of a new show which might be a record breaker.

Entirely different and wholly commendable is the growing habit of principal performers accepting *comparatively* moderate salaries. Leading men and women have come to recognise they are better off in a show enjoying a long run, than drawing big cheques for a few weeks in a show that has to close down because a huge salary list is a main item in big expenses, allowing no profits.

Add to the two leading people, half a dozen other artists, playing important roles or small parts and you have another £400 for your salary list. Of course, it *could* be double that. It *might* be little more than half.

Libraries have been written, tempers befouled and murder almost done trying to discover whether stars make or mar the play. By the very faintest margin, perhaps, the stars have it. Because, on occasion, the unique powers of this or that actor or actress have saved a bad play. Even given it a good run. But a good play could never be a triumph in the hands of poor or unintelligent performers.

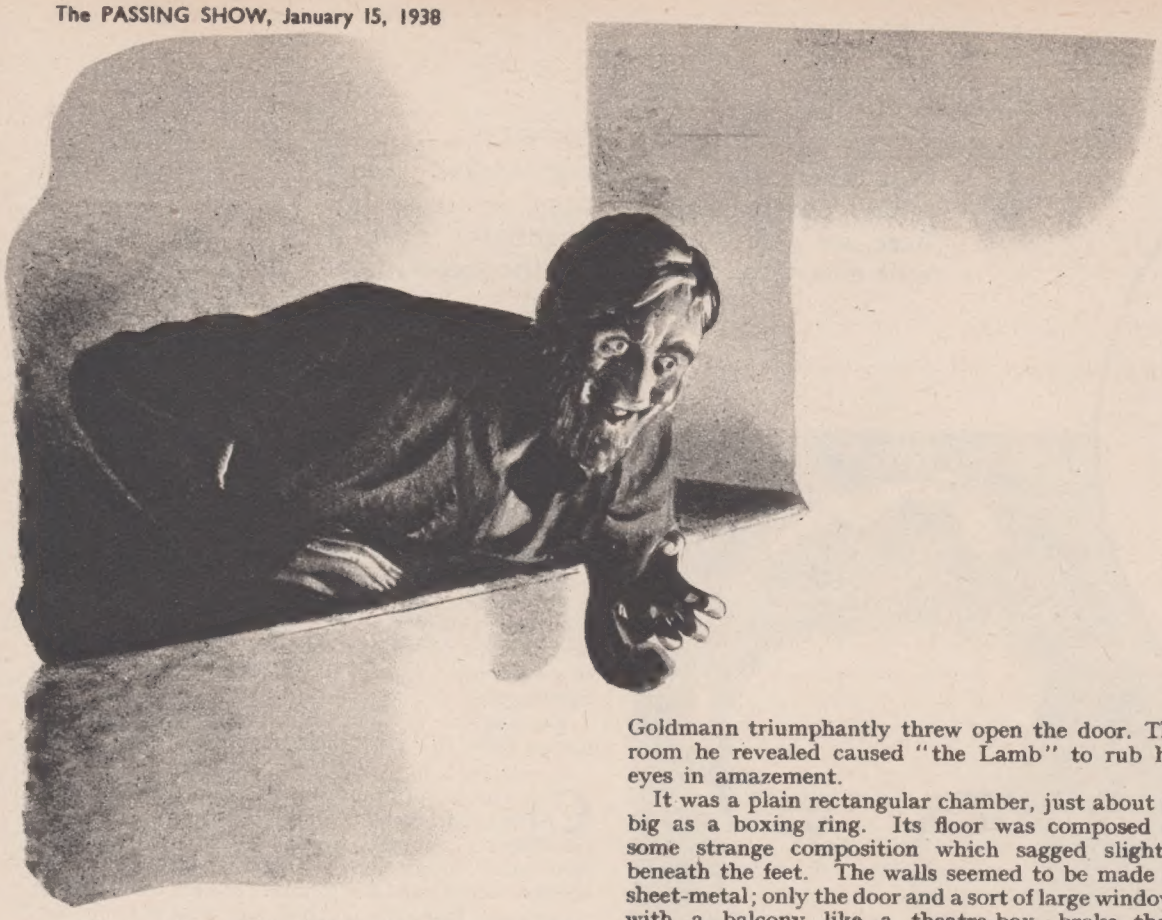
From the front of the stage let us go behind to the stage hands. There are more misconceptions touching them than any others in the theatre. A dozen or so is the public's idea as to their number. It is a wrong idea. Sixty to eighty is the complement for an average theatre; for a big production 100 to 140 may be needed.

Electricians, supervisors, scene shifters, property men, fly men, day men, their wages range from £6 6s. to £2 weekly; taking 80 as a mean figure at £4 weekly there is another £320 to the wages account. But who will blame stage hands when the show's a flop?

Without a theatre there could be neither success nor failure. Rents vary as between that for the Little Theatre and that for the Hippodrome, but an average would be £300 a week. Three or even six months rent in advance is usually contractual, so you see where the running costs are going.

But—these are all running costs. Not a word has yet been said about *production* costs. Costs for scenery, for dresses, and so on. Costs that have to be met, money that has to be poured "down the drain" before the first curtain ever goes up.

Record making run. Or first night failure. How is it done? Indeed, nobody knows. *But both cost the same money!*



# ROBOT REVENGE

## BY I. O. EVANS

ILLUSTRATED BY SEABRIGHT

IT is not usual for champion boxers to be famous also as inventors. Few of those who delighted in "Lamb" Macdonough's victory imagined that he had anything to do with the Macdonough television set by which they watched his exploits in the ring. Nor did his colleagues imagine that he was known throughout the length and breadth of the land as one of the smartest welter-weights England had produced. Still, his dispute with old Professor Goldmann was amusing enough to cause a stir in the engineering world as well as in sporting circles.

The alarming increase in aircraft accidents had led the *Daily Post* to offer a fabulous sum for the invention of an efficient airplane stabiliser. After a keen competition the prize was at last awarded to Macdonough, whose ingenuity has made flying as safe as—watching a boxing match.

The award was followed by a terrific outburst from Goldmann. The old man had put forward a device similar in some ways to that of Macdonough, but the Awards Committee decided it was far less practical. Goldmann appealed to the Awards Committee, to the *Daily Post*, to the public, declaring that Macdonough had stolen his ideas. Then he accused the Committee of corrupt practices, and made such an uproar outside the *Post* offices that he was run in for creating a disturbance!

Chancing to meet Macdonough one day, in Hyde Park, he even tried to assault him; but he was no match for the burly "Lamb," who, disdaining to hurt the poor old fellow, simply hung him by his coat on the railing and left him to be removed by the police. Finally Goldmann had started legal actions against Macdonough, the Committee, the newspaper, and indeed, everybody concerned. Then just before the case came on, he had withdrawn his charges, apologised publicly and paid his opponents' legal expenses; and soon the whole matter had been forgotten.

Macdonough himself had almost forgotten the whole affair when one evening, he ran into his former opponent. Goldmann greeted him very affably with apologies and the "Lamb," of course, was quick to accept them. He was willing enough to make friends and he gladly consented, when the old fellow invited him to step around to his workshop. Goldmann talked very mysteriously about some new invention he was working on and kept dropping dark hints as they trudged along the streets.

It was in a remote corner of Pimlico that they entered a dark warehouse-like building and passed along a dark corridor which ended in three steps leading to a locked door. Then Goldmann asked Macdonough to stop smoking—the "Lamb" was not as strict about his training as he should have been—and explained that the floor of his workshop was inflammable. When Macdonough had obediently knocked out his pipe and handed over his matches, Goldmann triumphantly threw open the door. The room he revealed caused "the Lamb" to rub his eyes in amazement.

It was a plain rectangular chamber, just about as big as a boxing ring. Its floor was composed of some strange composition which sagged slightly beneath the feet. The walls seemed to be made of sheet-metal; only the door and a sort of large window, with a balcony like a theatre-box, broke their gleaming surface. From the ceiling hung a cluster of electric lights, whose glare fell on an object more strange even than the room in which it stood. It was a human-looking Robot figure with a brutal repulsive face, body naked to the waist, hands encased in regulation boxing gloves, and feet shod with heavy boots.

Goldmann was very proud of his creation. His "mechanical boxer" he claimed, would not only bring him fame and fortune, but would also revolutionise boxing throughout the world. He pressed Macdonough to test the machine. The "Lamb" was not very enthusiastic about its possibilities, but thought it worth while to try it out. In a small dressing-room nearby, he changed into his boxing kit and Goldmann rather clumsily tied on his gloves. Then, equipped as for a fight, he returned to the scene of battle and stood in one corner waiting the signal to begin.

The old professor went out and shut the door; a very few moments later he appeared in the window above. "All ready?" Macdonough nodded, and though there was no one to heed him, Goldmann gave the customary introductions: "On my right, "Lamb" Macdonough, champion; on my left, R. Obot, Esq., novice . . . Seconds out of the ring . . . Time!"

There came the click of a switch, followed by the soft purr of machinery, and the monster woke to life. It lifted its arms to the approved boxing position; a pause, then it suddenly launched a blow at its opponent's head. Macdonough guarded instinctively, noticing with interest the human action of the machine. Then, dodging a second swinging blow, he drove home a rattling left-hander to its jaw. There was no "give" to the creature, as there would be to a human opponent, and the impact jarred his hand badly.

No use trying to press the fight, he thought—only bruise his fist for nothing; he would keep to the defensive. But its continual blows were getting rather a nuisance, so he stepped aside for a breather.

To his surprise the thing swung round to face him. He was not prepared for this and, in his amazement, he dropped his guard. A sharp rap on the forehead steadied him and once again he took up his defence. Then, getting rather bored with the uneven fight, he took two sharp paces backward out of the reach of the smiting arms.

There seemed no end to the possibilities of this beastly object. It slid over the floor towards him, its arms still tirelessly working and tapped his claret with a neat right-hander. Goldmann, in his box, gave a squeal of delight. Still, it did not advance as quickly as he could retire, so he might always win a few seconds' respite by backing out of its reach. He found it well to do so several times during the round, for the machine was more tiring than any human opponent. Then, to his relief, the voice above exclaimed "Time," the switch clicked, and the monster came to rest.

The door opened and Goldmann entered the arena, his face flushed and his eyes gleaming wildly. "Well, champion," said he, sarcastically, "I've shown you something new, yes?"

"It's quite a marvellous affair," smiled Macdonough, mopping his face with his gloved hand.

"Now come and look at the mechanism." And Goldman opened a small shutter in the thing's back.

Macdonough peered in at the complex machinery inside. It certainly was a most ingenious arrangement. A compact little dynamo drove a shaft; on this a number of cams regulated the action of the arms, giving them the strange variety of blows that had so amazed him during the combat. Below, and apparently connected neither with dynamo nor with the arms, were another set of cams, similar in design but considerably larger. "I don't quite see the purpose of those?" he said to the inventor, who was ecstatically fussing around his creation like a hen with one chick.

Goldmann closed the shutter and stood erect. "It's like this," he explained, "the small set is meant for boxing; but these larger ones are used for *fighting*. Also they put the feet into action. The first ones bruised your arms and cut your face, didn't they?"

Macdonough nodded.

"Well, this set will about knock you to pieces. Now, hands up!" he shouted. "Up with them!" and Macdonough found himself staring into the barrel of a revolver.

"So Mr. Professor, Mr. Inventor," continued Goldmann, his face contorted with rage, "at last your sins have found you out! You stole my other invention—now *this* invention will steal away your life! You, the champion boxer of England—see how you can box *this*!" Still keeping Macdonough covered, he backed away through the door, which swung shut behind him.

Fully alive to his peril, the "Lamb" leaped to the door. It was fast shut, however, and in any case he was hampered by his thick clumsy gloves. He tried to tear them off with his teeth, but as he fumbled with them a shout of derision rang through the room. "Second round, to the death! Seconds out of the ring!" A pause that seemed endless. "Time!" And again there came the click of the switch.

Now the whirring of the machinery was deeper and more ominous in tone and the creature's arms shot back and forth with redoubled vigour as it moved over the floor. Macdonough was under no illusion; never could he stand up before such blows; his only chance would be to dodge them as long as possible until help came from outside or until the frantic figure in the box above had returned to its senses.

For it was now clear that Goldmann was quite mad. He hung over the balcony, foaming at the mouth, his eyes gleaming as he hurled taunts against the "Lamb" or shouted encouragement to his creation. To and fro the boxer mercilessly glided about the floor, while Macdonough dodged before it from side to side. But for the slowness of its advance, he would have stood no chance whatever. For a time he managed to elude its blows. Then he began to tire, while the machine showed no signs of fatigue . . . and the continual turnings and twistings were making him giddy. In spite of all his efforts the thing landed him a swinging blow on the shoulder, a heavy numbing blow like the kick

# ★ *A boxer who makes flying safe and invents telecasting sets is well matched with the possessor of a mechanical punch*

of a horse. He staggered, then recovered by a mighty effort, and resumed his weary flight about the room.

Dazed and bewildered Macdonough ceased to realise his position; he seemed to be in the ring, facing a human foe who, eager to attack, was neglecting his defence. He let out a crashing right-hander to the point of the jaw. All his strength was behind the blow, which would have felled any human adversary like an ox; but it struck, not a yielding face, but the impassive mask of the machine. His hand was numbed with the shock, and before he could gather his shattered wits together he was hurled to the ground by a right hook on the side of the head. Again he was mercilessly kicked and trampled before he could painfully stagger to his feet.

It seemed to the "Lamb" that for all eternity he seemed to have been fighting; that the combat would last for endless ages to come. He lurched to and fro, feebly crying with pain and impotent rage, and holding his aching arms before his face to ward off the blows he was too weary to escape. Goldmann in his box, was nearly hysterical with joy.

Now Macdonough was dodging mechanically, his mind filled with attempts to understand the working of the invention.

It was certainly an ingenious affair. Evidently the flexible floor, sagging beneath his weight, controlled its movements, turning it to face him and luring it to follow him about. . . . And when he fell, and his weight was spread over the floor, then the feet were put into action. . . . Taken unawares, again he was knocked headlong. Summoning together all his strength, he leapt up and rushed to a corner of the room, where he collapsed, panting heavily, against the wall.

Then, in the nick of time, his wits returned. With instinctive motion of the trained fighter, he jerked his head abruptly out of the way. The fist crashed past his face and struck the wall with a heavy metallic clang. Straightway there came a grinding and screeching, and the figure ceased to move: the sudden jar had deranged the machine.

A scream of rage sounded from the box above. Then as Macdonough crawled painfully across the floor to the far corner, Goldmann came flying frantically into the room. The door slammed behind him—no chance of rescue yet. Opening the back of the figure, the madman fumbled for a while in its interior, crooning as though tending an injured child; then he crossed to Macdonough, his face contorted with rage.

"So, you villain, you thief," he snarled. "You thought you'd escape, didn't you? But there is no escape for you. If you had injured my wonderful darling with your coward's trick," he continued, "I'd have poked your eyes out, and set the floor alight. But you haven't hurt it, it only wants adjusting . . . and then, you champion boxer, you robber of other men's inventions, it'll smash you all to pieces."

So terrible was his fury that Macdonough shrank back appalled. Now Goldmann was fumbling with the machine . . . soon it would start and come to trample him to death, for he was too weak to fight any longer. Some minutes of silence, then came the sound he had learned to dread, the hated purr of the machine. Closing his eyes, Macdonough braced himself to meet his doom.

Straightway there came the noise of a heavy blow and a piercing shriek. Hastily opening his eyes, Macdonough realised what had happened. Goldmann had forgotten to turn off the power; no sooner had he repaired the machine than it automatically came into action. At once it had turned on the person who stood behind it, its own creator. A sudden unexpected blow had hurled Goldmann to the ground; he scrambled to his feet, only to be assailed by a storm of blows. Old and feeble, with no notion whatever of self-defence, he had not the ghost of a chance against the driving machinery.

It seemed only a few seconds before the inventor was again sprawling on the ground and being kicked brutally by the heavy feet. His cries rose piteously and died away into groans. Once again he contrived to rise, and was beaten down anew. There came the dreadful sound of snapping bones, and a trickle of blood ran over the floor. . . . The body twitched and then lay still, the moaning faded away into silence. . . .

Sickened by the terrible sight, Macdonough braced himself to rise to his feet and made for the door. As though the soulless machine could see or hear him, he moved stealthily, keeping his eyes fixed upon it. Preoccupied with the bleeding mass at its feet, it took no notice of him. His eager hands felt and fumbled eagerly with the catch. . . . But now the handle would not turn; his hands were muffled in the gloves and his muscles half paralysed with the beating they had received.

Frantically he called for help, the help that did not come. Frantically he beat upon the door, too spent to put any force in his blows. Yet the door could not be so very strong! With normal strength, he could easily have broken it down and escaped, but now his strength was gone. He would wait there until, Goldmann's body trodden to pieces, the dreadful creature was free to turn its attention to him. Again he kicked and hammered at the door. If only he had the strength of a man. . . .

If only he had the strength of a man! But the machine before him had more than the strength of a man! And the machine itself should open the way for his escape.

Slowly he walked across to face the monster, still wreaking its wrath upon the huddled broken figure at its feet. Overcoming his nausea with a great effort, he grasped the limp bundle that had once been Goldmann, and thrust it to one side. As he had foreseen, the machine swung round to face him. He backed across the room, dodging its whirling arms, and noticing with horror as he did so that the fists were dripping with blood, that the legs as high as the knee were smeared with clots of mangled flesh.

At last he felt the wall behind him; he edged along sideways until he felt the lock against his hand. Then he squatted down on his haunches, so that the blows passed harmlessly over his head and struck heavily against the door.

It seemed that his plan had failed, for the portal still held firm. A sudden cramp and a deadly sickness seized him. Might he not lie down for a moment? No; for if he did, the legs would come into action and all would be over. Now the room was swirling round him. Was he going to faint? If so, all was lost. By a tremendous effort he steadied himself. Would that door never give? He could not stand it much longer. . . . Right, left; right, left; . . . the arms were swinging rhythmically and lulling him to sleep. . . . But he must not sleep . . . must not sleep . . . must not.

There was a sudden rending and smashing, and he found himself sprawling on his back in the corridor. Then came the snap and flash of an electric spark, and in an instant the whole room was ablaze. The strange composition with which it was floored was burning like celluloid, and soon the metal walls were aglow and the woodwork was beginning to char.

Shielding his face with his arms, Macdonough stumbled down the corridor. For what seemed an age the latch resisted his gloved hand; then it gave and the door swung open. And even as he gained the coolness and safety of the street, he saw that the chamber behind was a mass of raging flames and that, poised on its threshold, and gleaming dark red against the crimson furnace behind, the mechanical boxer was still in action, its arms striking out valiantly against the empty air.

The professor hung over the balcony, foaming at the mouth, his eyes gleaming hatred as he hurled taunts against the "Lamb" or shouted encouragement to his creation

*Beginning a series of articles showing that Russia is not only an economic experiment*

# KEEPING A ROOF OVER YOUR SAMOVAR

**BY LARS MOËN**

Cinema technician and journalist who has worked in Moscow for the past five years

A LITTLE more than five years ago, I described for the readers of THE PASSING SHOW my first impressions of Russia, after something less than a year there. Had anyone told me then that I should be in the Soviet Union for another five years, I should probably have thought him quite mad.

Stay I did, however, and the natural assumption is that I must have liked it. As long ago as 1892, the late Professor Dillon wrote :—

> "It is difficult . . . to make it clear to those who have not lived long in the country, in what this secret charm of Russian life consists, for . . . it cannot be denied that its mysterious spell fascinates all foreigners who have spent several years in the country, causing many who have shaken its dust off their feet, apparently for all time, to return and settle there for life."

Despite many changes, this remains just as true to-day as when it was written. For the moment, I have "shaken its dust off my feet," but as to the future I make no promises. Life in Moscow was often difficult, sometimes maddening—but it was never dull.

No feature of life in Moscow, I suppose, will remain in my memory longer than the problems created by the housing shortage, so acute that it is not unlike a game we played in our childhood, in which a group of us marched round and round a row of chairs, there being one less chair than there were players. When the music stopped, there was a general scramble to sit down and one player was, of course, left chairless.

Fifteen years ago, at the end of the Civil War, Moscow, a city of shattered window-panes, of unheated buildings, of paralysed transport, with grass growing up between the cobble-stones in the principal streets and its population starving, was a city of less than a million souls. To-day there are nearly four million, and this past year alone births added 135,000 new citizens to Moscow, a figure far in excess of the death-rate.

Add to that the fact that everyone wants to live in the centre and not in the suburbs (a condition that will be remedied as municipal transport improves) and that a great many houses have had to be demolished for the widening of the streets, for the building of the Underground, or simply because they were unsafe, and you will realise why, in spite of a great deal of new building, living space is still at a premium.

There are many ways in which one may, with luck, become the possessor of a room in Moscow, but I know of none more ingenious than that employed by my friend, Koslov, who was my interpreter when I first arrived in the Soviet Union.

Koslov is a mild-voiced and mouse-like person of indeterminate age, whose meek exterior hides no small amount of shrewdness. Leaving Leningrad at an early age, he came to Moscow alone, to carve out a career, with a sketchy knowledge of English, French, and German as his principal asset.

He found plenty of work as a translator, but no room. For a fortnight he slept on the floor among hundreds of peasants in one of the railway stations; then an acquaintance gave him permission to sleep on the floor of his room, which was no softer than the other, but at least had more privacy. He might have gone on thus indefinitely, and even grown to like sleeping on floors, had not his friend had a considerable penchant for entertaining young ladies, on which frequent occasions Koslov was left to walk the streets.

This stimulated him to fresh efforts. There was little hope that he might make enough money quickly to buy himself a room; if he joined a building co-operative, he might have to wait four or five years; no chance had presented itself to marry a girl who owned a suitable room; and there was no immediate hope that a trust might consider his work as translator important enough to give him living quarters.

One evening, calling on another friend after he had been "turfed out" again, he saw golden opportunity staring him in the face; just inside the entrance of the house, up a few steps, was a huge landing—a great space serving no purpose whatever.

Excited by this discovery, Koslov persuaded his friend to introduce him to the house manager then and there. To this gentleman he pointed out the shocking waste of space and ingenuously suggested that he, Koslov, would be willing to pay good money as rental for a portion of it, if he might partition it off.

House managers are not noted for tender-heartedness, but this one seems to have been feeling kind that day, and after the twelfth refusal or so began to weaken, and finally gave in.

Jubilant, Koslov set to work to build his *pied-à-terre*. From the film studio where he worked he obtained a quantity of discarded three-ply, and from a nearby corner, where a house was being demolished, he acquired (after dark) a number of suitable uprights and a door.

The uprights were quickly in place and plywood nailed to them inside and out—and Koslov had a room! True, it was only a little more than six feet

square; but it was a room. He bought a narrow cot, a table and a chair, papered the walls, tapped the electric-light wires in the hall, put in an oil stove, and set up housekeeping.

Fate continued to smile on him. The house manager was relieved of his duties (perhaps he was *too* kind-hearted !) and another took his place. During the unsettled period while the old manager was leaving, and hence didn't care, and the new manager was not yet familiar with the situation, Koslov moved one wall out something more than a foot.

Within less than a year, there was another change of house managers, and this time Koslov moved both walls. The other tenants were good sports and said nothing, so Koslov became the proud possessor of a room which, as rooms went in Moscow, was quite passable.

Having told how one young man pulled a room out of thin air, so to speak, it might not be amiss to tell the sadder tale of how another lost his lares and penates.

Legoshin was a young engineer of quiet tastes, unmarried and exceedingly proud of his room, which was conveniently located, had gas, telephone, electricity and central heating, and which he had attractively furnished.

Moscow, with its four million population finds the housing problem acute, and serious, but it is not without a lighter side, for rooms are scarce and tenants are not too willing to renounce them, even though it may lead to a most farcical situation

He signed a contract with a construction company to go to the Urals for a year in connection with the planning of a new socialist city which was being erected in the wilderness. The usual course in such cases is to sublet the room and collect a substantial sum in advance from the temporary tenant.

Legoshin thought the matter over and decided that he would simply lock his room up rather than have a stranger live in it. His friends were horrified at this prodigal waste and tried to talk him out of it.

One of them was a young student in a military academy, who could not marry the lady of his heart, a blonde young person from one of the Baltic states, because he lived in a dormitory. Why could not Legoshin let him have his room for a year, and when he came back they would find something else?

Legoshin at first refused, but he was a sentimental young man and was moved by the frustrated matrimonial plans of the two, so that he let them have his room.

The year in the Urals passed quickly and happily. Living conditions were primitive, but the work was exciting and well paid. He returned to Moscow at the end of the year with a considerable sum of money, looking forward joyfully to resuming his cherished room.

To his bewilderment, the door was locked and on it a large patch of red sealing-wax bore the seal of the secret police. He telephoned to the military academy, and was curtly told that his friend was no longer there. He eventually located a mutual friend at work, who took him out into the corridor, lowered his voice, and looked all around carefully; then informed him that the blonde young person had proved to be a spy in the pay of a certain foreign power, and that both she and the young military student had "disappeared" some months previously.

Legoshin thought hard about it for several days. On the one hand, his most prized possessions—his books, pictures, furniture—were all in the room, and he hated to lose them. On the other hand, if he came forward to claim them, he might have to prove that he, too, had not been involved in whatever the young Baltic lady had been up to. In the end, he decided to let sleeping dogs lie, and sacrifice the room.

With apartments at such a premium in Moscow, it is not surprising that unscrupulous persons will go to almost any lengths to obtain one. Such a case which came to my attention was that of a doctor, a straightforward, honest chap, who let a woman who was without a room have his without cost for a year while he was away on a trip. When he returned, she repaid his kindness by refusing to vacate the room.

"You may move in if you like," she said in effect, "but I'm not moving out."

He took the matter to the People's Court, and the judge reprimanded the woman severely for her ingratitude. He then gave her a fortnight in which to find another place, failing which she would be evicted by the police.

More serious was the case of an ingenious rogue who took an attractive apartment on sub-lease, then, when the owner was far away, advertised it for rent. As the apartment was a highly desirable one, he quickly leased it to eleven would-be tenants, collected a year's rent in advance from each of the eleven, then disappeared. Police were not long in catching up with him, however, and the housing shortage will not worry him for some time.

One curious aspect of most of these sub-leasing arrangements is that they are illegal, yet are advertised freely in the official press. You have a perfect legal right to sub-let your room, but—and this is the crux of the whole matter—you may charge only the actual basic rent plus a reasonable hire for the furnishings. Since the question of what is "reasonable" is open to a variety of interpretations, and since there are always plenty of prospective tenants willing to pay almost any price to obtain a room, it is usually a rather lucrative matter for the owner.

In all cases, you cannot move into a room until the proper police authorities have agreed to register you at that address. Usually, this is a mere formality, but sometimes there are complications.

Once, when I was without a room for a fortnight, an American architect invited me to share his quarters temporarily. For certain reasons, it was impossible to register any more tenants at that address, and the landlady showed a nervousness bordering on hysteria over my presence. Later, I found out why: the chief of the police station for that district lived in the next apartment !

Legally, no one may be in a room at an address where he is not registered after midnight. At least two big Moscow hotels enforce this to the letter; if you are visiting friends late at night, at five minutes past midnight there will be a 'phone call or a visit from the management to inquire when you are leaving.

This law was designed, I gather, to make it difficult for fugitives from justice and unregistered persons to evade the police, and from time to time they check up on it in private homes as well. I have been awakened at three in the morning by a visit from them. After verifying the identity of those in the flat, they looked in the wardrobes and under the beds, then departed with as few words as they had arrived.

Any person occupying a room for more than two years automatically acquires certain rights of ownership. Thus the man or woman who marries someone already the owner of a room, and who lives in it for more than two years, becomes half-owner of the room. If the couple should then decide to separate, a delicate problem is created.

If the man is a gentleman, and is in a position to do so, he will probably let his ex-wife keep the room, even though it may have been his before they were married. Not many men, however, are in a position to do this, and it often happens that people divorce, then are obliged to go on living together in the enforced intimacy of a single room. I know of one such case where the man and his ex-wife have not exchanged a word in three years.

Not infrequently, one or the other re-marries, and brings his or her new partner home to the little room. The situations which this leads to can easily be imagined.

I once had an assistant who was living in a single room with his present wife, his ex-wife—and his ex-wife's mother ! This numerical superiority led to unfortunate results, for one fine afternoon the ex-wife and her mother beat up the current incumbent to the point where she required hospital treatment.

In rare cases, both parties re-marry and bring their new mates home to live. The resultant quadrangular situation must, I imagine, be experienced to be fully appreciated.

However, human nature shows a superb faculty of adaptation to the most difficult conditions, and in this case as well, a way has been found which solves, painlessly, most of these problems. This is the official Bureau for the Exchange of Rooms, with its own magazine.

Thus the parted couple living under a single roof may, if it is a reasonably good room, exchange it for two separate rooms, perhaps a bit smaller and farther from the centre of the town, belonging to a young man and young woman with separate establishments who wish to marry and set up a common domicile. One would suppose that the engaged couples would be discouraged by the number of divorced couples who wish to do the exact opposite of what they propose to do, but it never seems to.

If the room is big, has all conveniences, and/or is centrally located, you may be able to trade on an even basis for two passable rooms. Otherwise, you may pay a certain sum in cash, to cover the discrepancy in value. Not infrequently the young couple who wish to trade their two separate rooms, have them in the same house (this presumably having created the fatal propinquity !) As such a situation is not at all to the taste of the divorced couple, who wish to be as far apart as possible, the phrase "preferably in different districts" occurs often in advertisements offering to trade one big room for two smaller ones. This has led to the Soviet joke of the man who inserts an advertisement in the paper reading :—

"Man will trade one wife aged 40 for two aged 20, preferably in different districts."

If trading rooms is legal, outright sale usually is not. Sometimes the only way, legally, to buy a room is to go through the formality of a marriage with the present owner, after which he, or she, moves out, and in due course a divorce is arranged.

"Going home?" snapped Mr. Mornington. And for the further enlightenment of his secretary, he turned to Miss Firkin with a sickly smile of gratitude, "This is most kind of you, dear lady!"

# A MATTER OF MATRIMONY

**Mr. Belvedere Tipp, head of Delicate Missions, Ltd., can't be blamed for coming near to failure if the other fellow gets all the basic facts wrong**

## BY A. R. V. NELSON-SMITH

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

"DELICATE MISSIONS, LIMITED! Fine name for a firm like your's!" Mr. August Mornington plopped heavily into an armchair. "Spells efficiency."

"It is the only firm of its kind in existence, sir," Belvedere Tipp coughed discreetly. His last employer's legacy, which had freed him from the necessity of earning his living as a butler and enabled him to start his strange new business, had not freed him from certain characteristics of his calling, ingrained through years of service in half the noble houses of the land. "But I take it, sir, you have not come here to tell me that?"

"No," snapped Mr. Mornington, "I haven't."

For a moment the two men studied each other. Mr. Mornington—the prosperous business man, fully conscious of the fact and unwilling to admit, even in his offest of off moods, that the world held anything of consequence beyond the confines of his own limited activities. And Belvedere Tipp—the soul of discretion from the last stray hair on his rather egg-shaped head, to the neat white spats which he considered gave added distinction to his carefully-brushed morning coat and striped trousers.

"No," repeated Mr. Mornington, "frankly, Tipp, I'm in a bit of a jam. Get me out of it and I'll pay you. . . ."

Belvedere Tipp proferred a box of cigars with an air of pained surprise. Only when the financial standing of clients was in doubt did he allow the commercial side to obtrude so early.

"What, sir, is the precise nature of your dilemma?"

"It's delicate, Tipp, damn' delicate. It's—it's my secretary."

"Sir?"

"You needn't look like that. It's all above board. She's a secretary in a million. That's why I don't want to lose her."

"That I can well appreciate, sir. My own secretary, Miss Firkin, is, I imagine, of a similar type."

Mr. Mornington grinned. "I bet she isn't. Not if it's the one I saw outside. No, Tipp, mine's as good to look at as any of your film stars."

"I take it, sir, that you are not in danger of losing her because she desires to marry?"

"Desires to marry!" Mr. Mornington puffed viciously at his cigar. "You've hit it, Tipp. She 'desires to marry' all right, but that's not all. If it were just that I'd get her to stay on after, although it's against my rules. No, Tipp," he lowered his voice and looked uneasily around, "Miss Brown wants to marry *me*!"

"Sir!" Belvedere Tipp poured himself a glass of water from the carafe that stood on his desk. "And you, sir, I take it, are not willing?"

"Don't be a fool. When you get to my age and position you don't want a chit of a secretary bossing you about."

"And when did the young lady—er—declare her affections?"

"Declare her affections! What the devil do you take me for? Do you think I'd let her stay a minute if she *said* anything? That's what *you've* got to prevent."

Belvedere Tipp thoughtfully jingled the massive gold watch chain presented to him by the third Viscount Turret.

"I don't quite follow, sir. How do you know that the young lady—er—feels that way?"

"Oh—how does one know?" Mr. Mornington pursed his lips complacently. "One spots these things when one's knocked about the world, Tipp. Little signs, you know. Suddenly putting flowers on my desk every day. Making me wear a scarf when it's cold. Seeing that I get special biscuits with my tea. Trying to find out what I do at night. Telling me good shows to see. Looking at me when she needn't. Brushing my overcoat. Coming in the room at every pretext. Talking to me about herself. Oh, there's no doubt about it, Tipp!"

"She never did these things before?"

"Never! It all started recently. If it doesn't stop she'll have to go. And I'll never get another like her."

Belvedere Tipp folded his hands over his well-tailored *embonpoint*. "And what precisely, sir, do you wish me to do?"

"Stop her, of course! Get the idea of marrying me out of her head. Tell her I'm a bigamist—anything you like."

"No," reflected Belvedere Tipp without a smile, "that would be most unwise. There are other ways. . . ."

"Such as . . . ?"

"One moment, sir. I must consider whether I have the time to deal with your little problem." Belvedere Tipp paced slowly to the discreetly-

curtained window and, after a moment's grave consideration, returned ponderously to his chair.

"Very well, sir, I will accept your case. But I shall require your co-operation."

"Any damn' thing. What have I got to do?"

Belvedere Tipp lowered his voice and spoke earnestly for a minute or two. Mr. Mornington's face fell.

"Is that absolutely necessary?" he asked.

"That, sir, is my plan. Of course, if it doesn't appeal to you, I will charge you merely my fee for consultation. . . ."

Mr. Mornington jumped up and grabbed his hat.

"Get on with it!" he ordered. "I'm ready any time. And, remember, I want results!"

The slightest hint of distaste coloured Belvedere Tipp's smile as he bowed his client out.

"Miss Firkin," he called, "bring in the ledger!"

With the massive brassbound tome, in which he entered the smallest detail of every case, open before him, Belvedere Tipp regarded his secretary speculatively.

"We have a difficult case, Miss Firkin. I shall have to rely upon you to an unusual extent. Please make a careful note of your instructions."

Miss Firkin listened attentively and without emotion.

"Very well, Mr. Tipp. If the question of overtime should arise. . . ?"

"We will make the necessary adjustments, Miss Firkin."

"And when do we start, Mr. Tipp?"

"This afternoon, Miss Firkin."

"Very good, Mr. Tipp. And will there be anything else?"

"No, thank you, Miss Firkin. Unless—yes—have a couple of ham and tongue sandwiches sent in to me, a custard tart, and—and. . . ."

"A nice apple, Mr. Tipp?"

"A nice apple, Miss Firkin."

That afternoon, teatime and Miss Firkin broke simultaneously on Mr. Mornington's office. Miss Firkin was at her primmest and most imperious as she rapped on the counter. It gave her a certain spinsterly satisfaction to keep Mr. Mornington's young and undoubtedly attractive secretary guessing.

"But," protested Miss Brown, "Mr. Mornington never sees *anyone* without an appointment."

"And what makes you think he tells you all his appointments, young woman? Announce me!"

Miss Brown disappeared doubtfully into the holy of holies. She came out again looking more perplexed than ever.

"Will you please step this way, Miss Firkin."

Mr. Mornington came to the door to meet her, a practice he normally reserved exclusively for that select class of individual referred to by him as a "six-figure man."

"Come in! Come in!" he called with opulent geniality, "I've been waiting for you."

Miss Firkin wagged a roguish umbrella. Miss Brown stood by in dumb amazement.

"I am not to be disturbed," said Mr. Mornington.

The door slammed.

"Golly!" gasped Miss Brown.

But a greater shock was in store. Half an hour later, long before he usually left the office, Mr. Mornington emerged from his room and, accompanied by Miss Firkin, made jauntily for the outer door.

To his secretary, as he passed, he threw out a self-consciously casual: "Shan't be back to-night!"

"But, Mr. Mornington!" cried Miss Brown, grabbing a pile of papers and running after him, "The Byles contract—and the Wanderlust designs—and the. . . ."

"Pah! Trifles! They can wait!" Brushing her aside, he held the door ceremoniously open for Miss Firkin to pass through, "Good-night, Miss Brown!"

"*Good*-night, Miss Brown!" smirked Miss Firkin.

"The old cat!" exploded Miss Brown as their footsteps died away. "Whatever can he see in *her*!"

She would have been even more mystified had she been able to see round the block to the 'bus station at the corner. For there the gallant Mr. Mornington was scrambling hastily into a taxi, leaving Miss Firkin to find her own way back to the offices of Delicate Missions, Limited.

When she arrived Belvedere Tipp was working on The Case of the Obstinate Grandmother, which, owing to a certain lack of patience and co-operation on the part of his client, was causing considerable trouble.

Miss Firkin was inclined to be acid. She looked pointedly at the clock.

"All right, Miss Firkin" said Belvedere Tipp, "there will be nothing further to-night. Er—how did you get on?"

"It's going to be a long case, Mr. Tipp. The young woman is very tenacious."

"Indeed! What is she like?"

"I suppose some people would call her pretty—in a pert sort of way. I can almost sympathise with Mr. Mornington."

"And what effect did your visit have?"

"It made her think, Mr. Tipp—very hard."

"Good! Then we shall see what Mr. Mornington has to say about it to-morrow."

Mr. Mornington had a tremendous lot to say; so much that the telephone wires quivered with the strain.

"Now listen, Tipp!" he bawled in the uncompromising tones of a captain of industry at bay, "you've made it a damn' sight worse. She's positively cooing over me this morning. Says I've got a cold and ought to go home early. Wants to get me some filthy tonic. . . ."

"And have you a cold, sir?"

"Yes, dammit. . . ."

"Then I suggest, sir, that Miss Firkin fetches you and—er—looks after you. . . ."

"I don't want that woman near me. She reminds me of graveyards. . . ."

"Then I regret, sir, I shall not be able to proceed with the case . . . I *beg* your pardon, sir? Oh! Very well, sir, I suggest about one o'clock. Good-bye, sir."

So it came about that just before lunch Miss Firkin made her second appearance at Mr. Mornington's office. With a sniff at Miss Brown she made her way round the counter towards the inner room. At the secretary's protests she drew herself up frigidly. "I am perfectly aware," she said, "that your employer is unwell. That is why he sent for me."

"Then you'd better go straight in," said Miss Brown, bitterly. "He's all alone." Back at her desk, she rapidly sorted out files of papers requiring Mr. Mornington's signature; there was little prospect of his enjoying another long *tête-à-tête* with Miss Firkin.

But a similar thought seemed to have occurred to Mr. Mornington, for no sooner had the door closed behind Miss Firkin than it opened again and they both came out.

"Going home!" snapped Mr. Mornington, who had a large, multi-coloured muffler wound round his neck. And, for the further enlightenment of his secretary, he turned to Miss Firkin with a sickly smile of gratitude, "This is most kind of you, dear lady! *Most* kind of you!"

The slam of the outer door and Miss Brown's slamming down of her papers were simultaneous.

"'Dear lady' indeed!" she snorted. "One of these days he'll be sorry!"

Belvedere was munching his post-prandial apple when Miss Firkin returned.

"Any progress?" he inquired.

"Mr. Mornington was inclined to be restive," reported Miss Firkin, wiping the rain from her steel-rimmed spectacles. "He resents the idea of spending an afternoon away from the office. But the young woman has been taught another sharp lesson."

"Excellent," purred Belvedere Tipp, looking for the appropriate page in the ledger, "we must persevere, Miss Firkin; we must persevere."

There was no hint of a cold in Mr. Mornington's voice when he telephoned the next morning.

"It's getting unbearable," he yelled, "you're no damn' good at all. There's a hot water bottle on my chair this morning, smelling salts on my desk, and she comes in every five minutes to see if she can feel my pulse. I've had enough of it, Tipp. Either you get something done or. . . ."

"Patience! Patience!" admonished Belvedere Tipp. "Often, sir, things have to be made worse before they can be made better. The young person's reactions are perfectly normal. We must persevere, sir, and gradually she will come to realise that your—er—affections are placed elsewhere."

"My affections!" An ominous spluttering choked the wire. "Look here, Tipp, you aren't trying to swing anything on me, are you?"

"Sir!" The indignant reproach in Belvedere Tipp's voice penetrated even Mr. Mornington's hide. "What's that, sir? You will be patient? Very good, sir. Then Miss Firkin will call for you as usual."

So Mr. Mornington's routine continued to suffer and every evening, when normally he would have

(*continued on page* 17)

# Always Recruiting!

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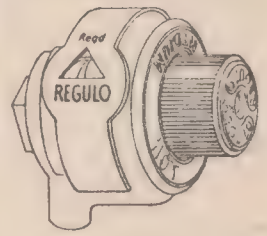


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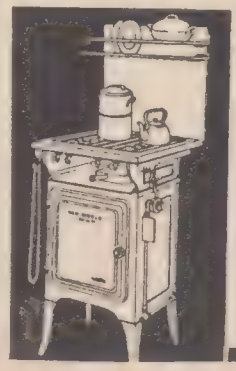

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COUPON

## *Continuing* A Matter of Matrimony — *by* A. R. V. Nelson-Smith

been calling for his last batch of letters, he was to be seen diving into a taxi at the 'bus stop round the block, while Miss Firkin fought her way on to a No. 11.

At the end of a week, Mr. Mornington's temper shook the office from chief clerk to lift-boy, Belvedere Tipp found Miss Firkin increasingly "difficult," and Miss Brown, while preserving a manner of blank negation in the face of the most searching inquiries by other members of the staff, showed no signs whatever of abandoning her tender solicitude towards her boss. For every snarl she had a smile; for each snub an excuse. And always, when the day was wet, it was Miss Brown who dried his coat. And Miss Brown it was who saw that he never sat in a draught; who made sure that the flowers on his desk were always fresh, and who said one day, apropos of nothing:

"Don't you think, Mr. Mornington, that marriage is the most important thing in a girl's life?"

"Take this letter to Stiff and Boko!" cried Mr. Mornington. "Then get me a taxi!"

In less than ten minutes he was closeted with Belvedere Tipp.

"It *may* have been quite an innocent remark," commented Belvedere Tipp, judicially pressing the tips of his fingers together, "then again it may not. . . ."

"It's the end," declared Mr. Mornington dramatically, "she'll have to go. I'll make young George Briggs my secretary. He can learn to type. I'm through with women. And you needn't think you're going to get any money out of me, Tipp!"

"Money, sir!" Belvedere Tipp shuddered distastefully. "It is immaterial to me if you wish me to abandon the case with a successful conclusion just in sight. . . ."

"What do you mean? Just in sight!"

"The onlooker, sir, always sees most of the game." Belvedere Tipp flicked open a cupboard under his desk and produced a decanter and siphon, "Allow me, sir. Yes, sir, those outside the ring see all the punches; those inside just feel 'em. Now, this case sir; it's gone just as I thought it would. But it's bound to be slow. A woman's heart, sir, is a funny thing; you can't drive it—you've got to lead it. And you can't do that all in a day. Now, sir, if you would only persevere with my plan for another week or two. . . ."

"Never!"

"Then, sir, we must take a short cut."

"It'll have to be damn' short. . . ."

"My dear sir, there are more ways of killing a pig than choking it with cream. I shall deal with the matter personally."

"Well—what is it?"

"I hardly think, sir, I need trouble you with the details." Belvedere Tipp bowed deferentially over the door handle. "You may rely on me, sir. All I ask is that you remain out of your office to-morrow morning. Yes, I must insist, sir. I would rather you had persevered with my other plan but—you definitely won't, sir? Very well, sir. I shall take action to-morrow. Good-day to *you*, sir!"

He watched his client out of the office, then beckoned to Miss Firkin.

"Your assistance in this case is no longer required, Miss Firkin. I am now dealing with the matter personally."

"Thank God!" said Miss Firkin with rare fervour and displaying no curiosity about the next move.

But her curiosity and something more were aroused the next morning when she entered the office to find, not the Mr. Tipp she knew, but a disreputable travesty of Mr. Tipp, clad in an ill-fitting and much stained lounge suit of early vintage and looking, as much as such a thing were possible, like a seedy commercial traveller of the old school.

Belvedere Tipp smiled condescendingly at her dismay.

"Disguise," he explained. "You have never known me use it before. I seldom do. But this morning I am going to see the young person herself and it is desirable that no trace of my visit should remain. Er—how do I look?"

"Turn round," said Miss Firkin. "Now back again. Well, it isn't really any business of mine, Mr. Tipp, but if you were to ask me I should say 'Disguise your voice.'"

"I shall speak in common accents, Miss Firkin. And I shall wear this." With a gesture of pride he fixed a flowing moustache to his upper lip.

"I should hardly recognise you, Mr. Tipp."

"Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Miss Firkin!" He poised a greasy bowler on his head. "I shall be back for lunch. If Mr. Mornington should telephone tell him that he should notice a marked difference this afternoon."

Miss Brown eyed her visitor with disfavour. "No," she repeated coldly, "I don't know when he'll be back and in any case I'm afraid he'll be much too busy to see you. Perhaps you might care to leave a message?"

"Wot I 'ave ter say," articulated Belvedere Tipp carefully, "his fer 'is hears halone."

"Then you had better write."

"That 'ud be too late. I tell yer, miss, hit's hurgent."

"Well, I'm sorry. . . ."

Belvedere Tipp laid his hat on the counter and eyed Miss Brown appreciatively, conscious of a clash between an undignified desire to prolong the interview and a dutiful urge to get down to business.

"See 'ere," he said confidentially, "know 'oo hi ham?"

"No. I don't think you gave me your card. . . ."

"Hi'm a 'tec!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Ho, come orf hit! Private detective, miss. Hemployed by Mr. Mornington."

"Indeed?"

"Hi hexpeck yer knows wot for. 'E tells yer hall 'is business, don't 'e?"

"I *am* in Mr. Mornington's confidence," admitted Miss Brown, with a cautiously puzzled frown.

"Then yer can do 'im a service. Tell 'im she's got aht. Tell 'im she's 'ere hin this very tahn. Hi've follered 'er."

"Followed who?"

"'Is wife, hof course."

The paste pot in Miss Brown's hand crashed to the floor.

"His *wife*. . . !"

Belvedere Tipp's voice rose in alarm. "'Ere, you've bin leadin' me hon! Yer sed 'e told yer hev'rythink! Fer Gawd's sake, miss, don't let hon. Hit'd break 'is 'eart hif 'e thort hanyone knew wot 'e 'adn't told. 'E's that sensitive abaht hit, miss. . . ."

"What's the matter with her? Why doesn't she live with him?"

"Hi didn't hought ter tell yer, miss. . . ."

"Come on!" Miss Brown's tone was fierce. "You can tell me the rest! Or I shan't believe a word of what you've said, and I shall certainly tell Mr. Mornington all about it."

"Fer Mercy's sake, miss, don't do that. 'E'd never git hover hit. Hi'll tell yer, miss, if yer promise faithful never ter breave a word."

"All right," agreed Miss Brown, reluctantly.

Belvedere Tipp leaned over the counter and tapped his forehead. "Bats," he said tersely.

"Oh! How *dreadful*! How long has it been like this?"

"Years and years and years. Hages, miss."

"What's she like?" demanded Miss Brown suddenly.

"Long an' scraggy. No proper shape. Gawd knows wot 'e hever saw in 'er, but yer never can't tell the way hof a man wiv a maid, miss. Thinks she ain't never bin married and calls 'erself Firkin."

"Heavens!" cried Miss Brown. "Then she's found him! She's been and fetched him day after day. Oh, what can we do?"

"Yer don't say, miss! That's bad. An' Hi thort Hi'd got 'er taped proper! There's nuffin' yer can't do, miss, hexcep' keep yer mouf shut an' act as hif yer knew nuffin'. Yer can trust Mr. Mornington, miss. 'E knows wot ter do. Hi hexpec' 'e's 'umourin' 'er. Hi shouldn't be surprised hif 'e's halready got 'er hunder lock an' key agen an' yer won't see 'er no more. But hif yer finks hanythink hof 'is feelings, miss, don't yer never say nuffin' ter 'im abaht hit. Let the dead bury their dead, in a manner hof speakin'."

"Of course, I'll never breathe a word," vowed Miss Brown. "That accounts for everything. Oh, the poor, poor man."

"Then Hi leaves 'is secret hin safe keepin'. Good day ter yer, miss. Nice ter 'ave 'ad this chat."

When he returned to the office, Belvedere Tipp was again himself.

"I think the Mornington case is disposed of, Miss Firkin. Please hand me the ledger."

But for once in a way he was over-sanguine. The Mornington case bade fair to become his first failure.

Miss Firkin answered the telephone. She held the receiver at arm's length.

"It's that Mr. Mornington," she said. "He's raging."

It was several minutes before Belvedere Tipp could either get in a word or make sense of what he heard. At last: "I take it, sir, there is no improvement in Miss Brown's behaviour?"

"Improvement!" yelled Mr. Mornington. "It's appalling. Absolutely appalling. What the devil have you been doing? She's following me all over the place like a widowed mother who's lost her only child. Every other minute she gloops at me soulfully and her eyes fill with tears and when I say anything she turns away and gulps. I tell you I'm through with her—and you! Young Briggs becomes my secretary to-morrow and you can whistle for your fee. What? WHAT? Well, it's your last chance! Clear it up by ten o'clock in the morning or I'm done with you!"

When the time came to go home, Belvedere Tipp was still deep in thought. As she was leaving, Miss Firkin interrupted him.

"Shall I have anything sent in, Mr. Tipp?"

"No thank you, Miss Firkin—unless—unless——"

"A couple of ham sandwiches, Mr. Tipp?"

"No, thank you, Miss Firkin. Just—just——"

"A nice apple, Mr. Tipp?"

"A nice apple, Miss Firkin."

The firm of Delicate Missions, Limited, was undoubtedly up against the blankest wall in its history. But salvation was nearer than Belvedere Tipp dared hope; in fact, it was on the threshold of his office.

No sooner had Miss Firkin gone than a knock sounded at the door. Belvedere Tipp opened it wearily and jumped back in amazement. Miss Brown walked in. In the discreet light and shorn of his moustache she obviously did not recognise him.

When he had recovered from his astonishment the girl was seated by his desk and well into her story.

". . . and so you see," she was saying, "I found your card among Mr. Mornington's papers and I thought you would be the very person to help me."

"Proceed," said Belvedere Tipp dully.

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Tipp. Mr. Mornington's a very good boss, but he has a secret trouble that makes him rather snappy. I like my job very much, though, and I get a good salary. But now it's all over! He told George to-night that he's going to sack me for no reason at all and make George his secretary." Miss Brown dabbed her eyes.

"George?" prompted Belvedere Tipp.

"Yes. George Briggs. The man I'm going to marry."

"*What!*"

Miss Brown smiled faintly through her tears.

"The date was fixed and everything. But Mr. Mornington won't allow girls to stay on at the office after they're married, and we can't afford to live on George's salary alone. So I made myself specially nice to Mr. Mornington so that he couldn't do without me and would let me stay on, but the nicer I made myself the snappier he became, until now—now—" This time the handkerchief came into full use. "Oh, can't you please do something, Mr. Tipp? We can't pay you very much, but——"

A beatific smile spread over Belvedere Tipp's features. He placed a paternal hand on Miss Brown's shoulder.

"I shall be delighted to accept your case, my child. As for payment—that shall be my wedding present to you. No, please don't thank me. A gift in season is a gift thrice blessed! You can rely upon me, Miss Brown, to clear this little matter up immediately. Good night to *you*, miss."

The Most Dramatic Life Story of Modern Times

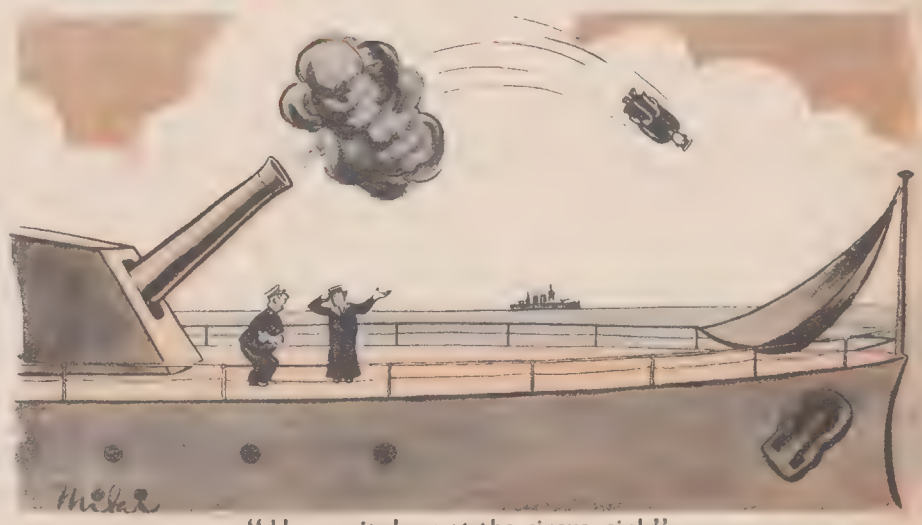
for the "Passing Show"

★ *see centre pages* ★

# Laugh

## The "PASSING SHOW"

"You see I'm rather keen on the girl in the pet-shop!"



"He saw it done at the circus, sir!"

"We put his hut on a revolving base, because he's got two holes to watch!"

# olkter

## w" Smile Section

" Plantin' yer green belt, Mrs. 'Arris? "

" It's all right, Ma'm, the brigade were holding their fancy-dress ball when the call came through! "

"And, dear," she coaxed, "you will get me the fan, eh? A beautiful fan in coral, with flowers painted on the gauze, eh?"

# TO PLEASE JUANITA

**SHORT SHORT STORY**
**Complete on this page, of a newspaper fan that was more precious than the smile of the Mona Lisa**

## BY W. A. SWEENEY

ILLUSTRATED BY E. RATCLIFFE

THE little fishing smack rocked gently on the star-mirrored waters of the Mediterranean, and the nets were already out. Away back behind it, on the shore, lay, fast asleep, the little village of Sarcares and the Eastern Pyrenees. Luis Alvaro, seventeen, dressed in the blue overalls and on his feet the espadrilles of the fisher-boy, had a respite from work for the moment and he sat looking out over the waters, filled with tragic reflection.

Though born on the French side of the Pyrenees—born, indeed, in Sarcares, he was of Spanish parentage, like so many of them there and, like Juanita, his eighteen-year-old "promised" with whom he had talked passionate love just a little while before in the darkest corner of a dark lane. Then he had left her to run down through the sleeping streets to the sea, to join his boat for the night fishing.

"And, dear," she had coaxed, "you will get me the fan, eh, for the Feast of the Assumption? A beautiful fan in coral, with flowers painted on the gauze, eh, and shining, with little diamonds, Luis?"

So she had wheedled standing there, also bare-footed save for a pair of espadrilles, her Spanish black eyes making his soul drunk, in the pale light of the moon.

"Exactly as you describe it, so will it be, love of my heart," promised Luis, solemnly. "Kiss me again, my Juanita."

And all this was why he was now so sorrowful, sitting in the boat watching the moon shimmering on the sea.

He decided, suddenly, to confide in his friend, Sylvain, who sat beside him. The atmosphere and setting were suitable for confidences.

"Sylvain," he whispered, "you know how it is with Juanita and me?"

Sylvain nodded. "Like with Berthe and me," he said.

"Well, she has set her heart on a fan of fabulous expense," explained Luis, "for the Feast of the Assumption. We shall be at the ball, of course."

"We shall all be there. But fans only cost two or three francs at Madame Cot's shop in the Rue Mont Blanc. I may give Berthe one, indeed." Sylvain was struck with an idea.

"I know—ordinary, cheap fans," said Luis, with something like a groan. "But she wants a fan in something like coral, with gauze and flowers painted all over it and glittering with diamonds."

"She is out of her mind," said Sylvain, calmly.

"I have promised her," murmured the tortured Luis. "Promised her solemnly."

"Then it is you who are out of your mind."

Next morning, early, saw Luis, still heavy of heart, setting off, with the wife of the owner of the boat, to sell the fruits of the night's labours in the streets of Sarcares. Between them they carried an enormous basket (she in rubber boots and a short shawl round her head and shoulders) filled with shining fish of all sizes and families, writhing and struggling, still among the seaweed. They stopped, as usual, before the house of Monsieur Marchandean, a regular customer, and here it was that our old, soft-footed companion, Drama, wrapped his cloak around him and padded into young Luis' life.

Monsieur Marchandean was a rich merchant in Perpiguan, who lived in this charming seaside spot with his pretty good-natured wife. It was her custom, after she had chosen the fish at the door and had seen the cook carry them off, wrapped in seaweed and cabbage leaves, to call Luis in for the money.

This morning he followed her timidly to the threshold of the room where, in a writing table in a corner she kept her small money, and he stood there while she rummaged and searched among a variety of objects, woman fashion, for the money in a drawer full of miscellaneous contents. He glanced around and noticed the different objects, mostly of a feminine nature, scattered about the room—flowers, books, scarves—and then, on a small table near the door he saw a fan and it held him fascinated.

It was half open, the handle in coral, the wing in some gauzy material which he could not define; the whole painted delicately in blue and gold and decorated with small, glittering stones. Real diamonds, though Luis did not know it.

Luis gazed at it almost petrified. If Juanita had one like that! If only he had that one to give her!

He saw it again next morning in the same place. Luis supposed, when he saw it there for several mornings, that Madame Marchandean never used it and, with a pang, thought of the expression on Juanita's face if he handed her this. . . .

Then, for a day or two, it was no longer in its place on the small table by the door, but one morning, as he stood waiting for his customer to search for her money, he saw it there again.

Madame Marchandean had her back to him. Luis looked at her back, then at the fan, and the next moment the fan was in his pocket. She turned and came over and counted out the money, not glancing at the small table but concentrating on financial exactitude, and he took it from her with a hand which he tried hard to keep from trembling.

Into the sunshine, down the road, round the corner to where he knew the wife of his employer was waiting for him—and just as he turned the corner he heard steps hurrying after him. A voice called on him and he stopped and turned. He saw Madame Marchandean's man-of-all-work, red-faced and excited and this faithful retainer lost no time in coming to the point.

"Hand over that fan you stole! Hand it over at once! Madame missed it from the table the moment you left the room. It was there before you came in. Out with it!"

"A fan, did you say?"

"Yes, a fan. Pass it over. And consider yourself lucky that Madame lets you off with simply returning it instead of having you arrested."

"And what, do you think, *I* would do with a fan?" bluffed Luis. "What do you take me for? Carmen, or the Queen of Spain? You're crazy, or perhaps drunk. Get out of my way."

He was about to move on when the other barred his way and seized him, brutally, with the idea of wresting the fan from its hiding place. Madame Marchandean's man-of-all-work was man-handling Luis and, suddenly, the latter got angry. In his haversack slung around his shoulder he had, since the night before, the wine bottle that accompanied the meal he always took with him when putting off for the night's fishing. He felt this bottle in his hand now and—then, in a completely confused fashion realised, a few seconds later, that his opponent was lying motionless on the cobbled street and from his head was trickling a dreadful, red stream. . . .

The events of the next few minutes were, to the boy, shadowy and unreal, as if happening to somebody else in a muddled dream. Women were gathered round him, screaming, chattering, accusing—while the figure on the ground still lay motionless. Next, hazy gendarmes swam into the nightmare and he felt handcuffs, cold and hard, upon his wrists. Then he walked away, still dreaming, he thought, and there were innumerable questions, and the fan was there before him again; and he heard himself explaining all about Juanita—"coral, with little sham diamonds. . . . I only make a few *sous* at the fishing, monsieur. . . ."

◆ ◆ ◆

The principal topic at the feast of the Assumption in Sarcares was the newspaper account of Luis Alvaro's story. Juanita, who, of course, could not write, got the *curé* next day to take down the following letter to be dispatched to Luis in prison awaiting trial.

"My best beloved,—I had my fan for the Feast, after all, just as you promised, and I send you all my love and thanks for it. It was more beautiful than the fan I had wished for. Dearest Luis, do you know what I did? I took the newspaper that printed all about how, for love of me, you stole a fan and nearly killed a man and I cut out the part that dealt with you and me, folded and re-folded it very carefully, then arranged it all in the shape of a fan, with a beautiful gilt pin for the handle, and used it throughout the ball. Everybody was looking at me and I was very, very proud. Oh, my Luis, each word of the printed story meant more to me than so many real diamonds. They cannot punish you very severely, Luis mine, you are too young. I shall wait for you and, when you come back to me, we shall marry and love each other for evermore. . ."

The *curé* wrote on patiently, and then paused, waiting for Juanita's dictation. She chose her phrases with care, thinking out, slowly, the most beautiful way to express herself to her best beloved and a proud smile played about her lips, while the long lashes of her black eyes were wet with tears.

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*Continuing*

## TEN TEACUPS

★ "THERE will be ten teacups at No. 5b Lancaster Mews, W.1, on Thursday, August 1, at 9.30 p.m. precisely. Sir Henry Merrivale is invited to attend at a demonstration with any guests he may choose to bring." Another invitation such as this, sent to Chief-Inspector Humphrey Masters a few days previously, led the police into the middle of a most baffling murder mystery.

Even while they were guarding the house to which Masters had been invited, Vance Keating, wealthy young adventurer, was shot dead in an attic that contained a table bearing ten teacups arranged in a circle.

Taking their problem to Sir Henry Merrivale, the great detective, Masters and his assistant, Sergeant Pollard, are surprised by the paucity of evidence they have to offer. They know that a cigarette case, found by the body, was owned by Mrs. Jeremy Derwent, wife of a solicitor to a man named Dartley, who was shot dead in similar circumstances two years previously. But as soon as they learned that Keating left all his money to Mrs. Derwent, they also found she had a perfect alibi.

They heard that Keating failed to attend a "murder" party given by the Derwents the night before the murder. Frances Gale said this was because Keating and his best friend, Ron Gardner, had quarrelled over her. Philip Keating, cousin of the dead man, says he saw Vance firing a .45 revolver at Gardner.

This revolver, which was owned by Gardner, was "stolen" from the murder party and found eventually beside the dead man.

Police inquiries revealed that No. 5b Lancaster Mews, is owned by Benjamin Soar, young antique dealer, who was also at the "murder" party. After having the house surrounded by police, "H. M.," Masters and Pollard force an entry, only to find Jeremy Derwent waiting for them. He confesses to having sent out a fake "invitation," and turning to Soar, who has come down from his bedroom to find out who is talking in his living-room, says "I am prepared to prove that your father killed William Dartley."

★

# WHY DARTLEY WAS KILLED

## BY CARTER DICKSON

ILLUSTRATED BY JACK M. FAULKS

DERWENT laid down his cigar on the edge of the table. He put his finger-tips together, tapping them gently, and looked up at the dimly-lighted portrait in the dim brown room.

"You don't mean," Masters said, "you don't mean the old gentleman who died six months or a year ago? But he couldn't have killed Vance Keating. He's dead. He——"

"You misunderstand me" Derwent corrected sharply. "I did not say he killed Keating; I said only that he killed Dartley. There, I think, is where your whole case has gone wrong. I told you you were paying too much attention to Keating and too little to Dartley."

"William Morris Dartley was shot twice with a .32 automatic pistol in the one furnished room of 18 Pendragon Gardens. He lay on his face between the table and the door, wearing his topcoat. His hat and gloves were on a chair. There were finger-prints of his in the room and finger-prints of the moving-men, who had handled the furniture; but no others. A wood fire had burnt out in the grate, and in this fire were found remnants of a large cardboard box, together with fragments of a piece of wrapping paper. This was not the box which had contained the teacups on the table; the container for the teacups was an ordinary dark wooden box some two feet long by one foot high —and this had been stolen, together with the paper in which it had been wrapped.

"Finally, on the table the ten teacups were ranged in a circle. They were without a finger-print of any kind; not only without a finger-print, but they had not even a glove-smudge or the mark of having been wiped.

I began my investigation," ran on Derwent's smooth, pleasant voice, "with the facts concerning the sale of the teacups—notably the extreme, almost incredible *secrecy* of the sale. We are informed that Dartley himself bought these cups on the very afternoon of the day he was murdered; that he bought them from old Mr. Benjamin Soar; and that he paid twenty-five hundred pounds in cash. Yet the fact that the cups had been sold at all came as a surprise to everyone until Mr. Soar senior announced it after Dartley's death. We know (a point I stressed to my friend Merrivale last night) that on the afternoon of April 30, Dartley did not go to Soar's shop and Soar did not visit him—although he paid cash. No receipt for such money is found in Dartley's accounts—although he paid cash. Mr. Soar's assistants, including his own son, knew nothing of this sale. Dartley's sister and his servants, actually saw the teacups in Dartley's possession It began to look as though Dartley had never bought the cups at all. What is the only piece of real evidence we have as to this? The only piece of evidence is that —at half-past nine on the night of the 30th—Dartley left his house in South Audley Street, carrying a biggish box or parcel, wrapped up in paper, such as *might* have contained the teacups."

"But did it? You have assumed that Dartley got the cups in the afternoon, and

"I am Mrs. Jeremy Derwent. Is my husband here?"
"Yes, madam, will you come inside, please"

took them home with him: you must assume this, since you say he took them away in a parcel when he left his own home at half-past nine. You have assumed that he himself took them to Pendragon Gardens——. Now what is the first thing an avid collector does when he acquires a fine new item? He examines it. He touches it. He even fondles it. Dartley would certainly have handled the teacups at home. If he took them to Pendragon Gardens that night he would certainly have handled them, for his finger-prints are all over the room. His finger-prints are everywhere EXCEPT on the cups. On those cups there is no print at all, not even a smudge or a mark to show they have been wiped.

Dartley, then, did not buy the cups and did not take them to Pendragon Gardens. The person who took them there must have been the murderer. But how are we to explain the fact that, whoever took them there, we find no mark on them at all? Somebody must have touched them, if only to range them on the table. This can be explained in only one way. We are informed that the cups had been packed in a big wooden box, each in its wrapping of excelsior and tissue paper; and they appear without a mark because someone has put each on the table and slid off its wrapping without touching the cup at all. This is clearly the man who later tells so obvious a lie about the sale of the cups to Dartley; the only man who had the cups in his possession at all; Mr. Soar himself.

"Shall I go on?" inquired Derwent.

He picked up his cigar again, and snapped on a lighter.

"On the other hand, we know beyond any doubt that Dartley did carry something to Pendragon Gardens that night; the biggish box wrapped up in paper, which was seen by both his butler and the taxi-driver. You will have noted that the fragments of a big cardboard box, and also wrapping-paper, were found in the fireplace. What was Dartley carrying in that cardboard box? It is a curious fact that the only thing missing from his collection, and inexplicably missing, was a certain large puzzle-jug in which he took a curious kind of pride."

Masters got up from his chair, extending his hand slowly to snap his fingers.

"Lord, sir, I believe—— You mean that there was an appointment arranged by the murderer; and to that appointment Dartley brought the puzzle-jug, while the murderer brought the teacups? You mean Dartley was killed just so the murderer could steal that puzzle-jug?"

"Exactly."

Derwent got to his feet and looked at young Soar. Briefly, the cold light in which Derwent moved changed to something like a human quality.

"Young man," he said, "I'm sorry. But before you begin to curse the old devil, remember that your father used *my* house to stage his murder." He pointed to the portrait over the fireplace. "Behind that picture there is a wall-safe. It has a letter-combination which is opened by the word LEEDS. You will find the puzzle-jug in there, behind the puzzle-lock. You have your search-warrant, gentlemen. Now, take your damned evidence and let me go home."

Benjamin Soar, junior, still sat motionless on the arm of the big shrouded chair.

"I don't know whether you're an old devil," he said, "but I do know you're a very patient one. Derwent, you persuaded me to take this house."

"Yes."

"Because you'd looked at it yourself, and you knew the combination of that safe——" Soar got up from the arm of the chair. Padding in his slippers, he went quietly to the mantelpiece, took down the picture and opened a powerful wall-safe behind. Out of it he took the jug, a monstrosity over a foot high, with long spreading spouts like arms and a great ear of a handle. It seemed less like a jug than a fantastic teapot, for it had a close-fitting lid. Although it appeared to be of blue china or porcelain, it seemed extremely heavy; and, when Soar banged it down on the table, it gave out a steely kind of sound.

"You've been trying for over two years to prove either my father or I had this. And even when you knew where it was, you couldn't get the police here except by a fake letter about ten teacups. You deserve a reward," said Soar. "Now take your damned evidence and let me go to jail."

Masters came up to the table.

"You admit, sir, that your father—— "

"Yes, my father killed Bill Dartley," Soar returned with savage bitterness.

"It's a pity you can't arrest him, isn't it? I suppose you can salve your conscience by arresting me." He stopped. "Sorry, Inspector; I know it's your job. I suppose it isn't any good my telling you I never knew my father had killed him, or anything about this jug, until an hour before my father died?"

"Just a moment, sir; hold on!" urged Masters. "But what's the point of this jug? Why did he want it? And, although it's all in favour of my business that you didn't, I still wonder why you didn't get rid of it or destroy——"

"How," Soar said, digging his hands into the pockets of nis dressing-gown, "would you go about 'destroying' a steel deed-box, Inspector, short of dropping it into a blast furnace? That thing is steel, under a porcelain shell. Try to remove that lid. You can't; it has a combination of its own. Do you know what the thing is, actually? It's a private safe, a little safe. That's why Dartley was so proud of it. That's where Dartley kept some of his papers. Do you know what Dartley was?"

"Oh, ah. I'm beginning to remember. The firm of Soar & Son," Masters told him, "was at one time suspected of selling bogus antiques. And Dartley, I recall, was at one time a bit tied up with blackmailing business deals. And I noted in the report that the things he chose to buy from your father he managed to get at a low price, a very low price."

Soar's dark eyebrows drew together. "My father—made mistakes. That I admit. There were times when we were in very low water. Dartley had retired and consequently he couldn't use his favourite blackmail tactics in business; so he merely used them in his hobby. He bought up all the evidence. Then he got my father to sign a statement admitting it. When I think of how that mild little swine went to work afterwards, I could——" He brought his fist down on the table so hard that even the steel jug was shaken. Then he turned composedly. "It wasn't even straightforward blackmail. Dartley wasn't even honest or cynical enough for that. He didn't say, 'Soar, I like that eighteenth-dynasty canopic jar you have there; hand it over.' No; he said, 'My dear fellow, I like that eighteenth-dynasty canopic jar; the price you quote is sixty pounds, but I feel sure that to an old friend you will let it go for thirty.' He didn't even think of it as blackmail: he called it good business. Well, I don't do business like that. Neither, God help him, did my father. Wyvern and I never suspected; we thought the old man had gone soft-headed. But in the course of a few years Dartley's 'good business' nearly ruined the firm, for he was a steady customer."

"Your moral tone," remarked Derwent, dryly, "is commendably high. So your

(*please turn over*)


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## *Continuing* Ten Teacups

father took a heroic resolution—and shot him?"

"What would you have done?"

"I don't know," said the other, with some abruptness. "That is the difference between us."

"Possibly. Will you continue with your Holmesian analysis, or do you think it would spoil your effect if I merely confessed?"

"Excuse me. You seem to think that all this comes from personal vindictiveness. Soar, that is not true. Remember, if you can, that there are other people in the world besides yourself; other people under suspicion. I tried, in the only way I could, to clear myself——"

"Rubbish," retorted Soar, making a flicking motion of his thumb and forefinger. "If you knew my father killed Dartley, you also know quite well he didn't kill Keating. And it's only Keating the police are interested in. You've dragged a dead man out of his grave for nothing."

Derwent shook his head, with a slow and rather fishy smile which did not go well with him.

"No, I think not. I have proved the one point in which the police are most interested ; whether there is, or is not, a secret society called the Ten Teacups. I have tried to show, and I think I have shown to their satisfaction, that such a society does not exist. This is a point, I notice, over which you have constantly tried to mislead them."

"You haven't proved it yet," the other told him, grimly. "But I'm going to prove it now. Look here, Inspector, let's get this over with.

"My father wanted to get back that 'confession' he had given to Dartley. He was willing to give Dartley a price for it, but if Dartley didn't hand it over he meant to kill him. There ; that's short and sweet. What Dartley most wanted in the world was that set of Majolica teacups; as you know, it was unique. My father offered to trade him the teacups for the confession.

"But he didn't trust Dartley an inch. Neither should I have trusted him. He went ahead with his preparations for murder. You may be interested to know, Inspector, that the police's original theory of the crime—at least, so far as it was suggested in the papers—was the correct one. Dartley was to be 'lured' into an empty house, which he thought was the murderer's own house; and then, when the body was found, there would be nothing to point towards the real murderer. Your ex-house, Derwent, was chosen only because of its 'haunted' reputation, a circumstance which seized on my father's imagination. He showed the kind of imagination with which I have been cursed by heredity. He ordered the furniture anonymously and——"

Masters interposed. "That's all very well. That's what we thought all along. But if your father did all this funny business, why in the name of sense did he write to the police? That's senseless."

"Haven't you guessed it yet, Inspector?" inquired Soar. "He didn't. It was *Dartley* who wrote that to the police. You recall its phrasing, 'There will be ten teacups at number 18 Pendragon Gardens,' and the rest of it, concluding with the businesslike, 'The police are warned to keep an eye out.' You can bet that Dartley wrote it ! Haven't you heard that the first teacup letter was written on a different typewriter from those sent as instructions to the Domestic Furnishing Company and the Cartwright Hauling Company? Dartley didn't trust my father, any more than my father trusted him. He couldn't tip off the whole show to the police; but he thought he could protect himself. He protected himself in another way, too. He didn't shove my father's 'confession' into an envelope and take it along in his pocket. Not he. My father was old, but he was a large and powerful man. Dartley was a featherweight little stick. So Dartley took along his puzzle-jug; his real puzzle-jug, his private safe with the confession inside it; the safe that couldn't be smashed on the floor and couldn't be opened by anyone who didn't know the secret of taking off the lid.

"Yes. And he died because he wrote to the police, and because he took that jug along."

Though Soar's voice shook, he was speaking in a steady tone; and Pollard could sense what an effort that calmness cost him.

"You don't get any grisly details from me, Inspector. Except to explain how it happened. It happened when Dartley took that puzzle-jug out of the cardboard box and flourished it; it happened when Dartley announced how he had written to the police. My father told me that something went wrong in his own head then. Just like that. Dartley was standing over by the fire. My father got his hands on him and his hand over Dartley's mouth, before Dartley could squeal. He got out the pistol, but Dartley was wriggling and the first shot went through the back of his neck. Dartley crawled towards the table and was finished by a shot through the back of the head.

"So you're looking horrified, are you? I don't blame you. I'm not extenuating. I'm not defending. I'm only telling you, as I've seen the thing in nightmares ever since I heard of it. If you think it's brutal what do you suppose *I* think of it?

"Thank you : I'll wind this up as quickly as I can. What you want to know is, how my father came to leave the teacups behind, all ranged on the table, when they were still in their box and Dartley hadn't even seen them that night. Well, the reason is just as ordinary and just as horrible as any other point. I imagine Derwent has guessed it, by his look. A little deduction from the facts and you'l have it.

"The cups were left—but their wooden box, two feet long by a foot high, was missing. When my father had set or Dartley, Dartley was standing by the fire The cardboard box and wrapping paper for the puzzle-jug were kicked into the fire accidentally when Dartley tried to get away. My father couldn't save them; for his hands were busy in another way. After the pig-sticking was all over, how the devil do you think he was going to carry that jug away without its being noticed by everybody for half a mile? Look at the jug ! It's over a foot high in itself it's got spouts like cathedral spires sticking up at all angles to add another ten inches; it's bright blue—one glimpse of it, remembered by anybody afterwards, would finish whoever carried it. He couldn't conceal it under his coat. He couldn't even wrap it up in a piece of paper ; try it and see. Yet the whole jug had to be carried away, because he didn't know the secret of taking off the lid and the paper was still inside.

"If you can think of any uglier position than the possibility of being seen walking through London streets with a monstrosity nearly two feet high. . . . There was only one thing he could do. He could pack that jug in the teacup-box : an ordinary commonplace wooden box, which a dozen people could see without thinking anything odd. But he had to leave the teacups behind. He obviously couldn't take both. Both alternatives were dangerous, but I think he chose the better one. For his imagination supplied a little flourish, a little brain-teaser, a little suggestion which has turned you dizzy ever since. You know what he did. He slid the wrappings off the cups, put them in a mysterious circle on the table like a symbol, and left them. He had turned damning evidence into a clue pointing away from himself. He covered up by opening up. He created the Myth of the Ten Teacups."

Soar's heavy breathing had grown a trifle slower. He took a turn up and down in front of the fireplace, his black dressing-gown flapping like a monk's robe; then he faced them with sardonic weariness.

H. M. scratched the side of his jaw.

"Then you'll see, Masters," he said, apologetically, "what we've come to at last. The Dartley case is settled. The mythical society of the Ten Teacups is exploded as a hoax and a delusion—though, burn me, I hate to see it go; it was good fun while it lasted. We're back to this; some very ingenious murderer merely *used* the Dartley case to throw dust; to kill Vance Keating in such a way that the police should go whoopin' away after a terrible secret society and neglect motives closer to home. We were intended to see the murder of Keating as only a link in a sort of foreign chain. That was why the murderer set his stage as he did

*by* Carter Dickson

—and deliberately reproduced as many features of Dartley's murder as he could. He couldn't find any more teacups with peacock designs on 'em, because they were unique; so he did the next best thing by snafflin' a Milanese cloth with a design resembling the first. Do you begin to see somethin' else? That was also why he scattered so many clues—scattered 'em lavishly—scattered 'em like a paper-chase. He did a little something to cast suspicion on just about everybody in the case, so we might think a number of people were all concerned together in the sinister Clan of the Teacups. The bogey was decked out in everybody's clothes. It very nearly succeeded in foolin' us, Masters. But I believe there's only one person who killed Vance Keating; one person that I'm more interested in than I've ever been in a throat-cutter before; and he's the person we want.

"Or should I say *she*?" added H. M. "Because Keating himself believed there was a Society of Teacups; that's how the murderer got him; that's how he was lured into that house and shot."

The low lamplight, coming from across the room between the two windows, made an even greater monstrosity of the many-armed blue jug on the table in the middle. They gathered round that jug, while H. M. still sprawled in his chair.

"I wonder what our friends are thinkin'?" H. M. asked and turning to Soar added, "What about you, son?"

"Me?" said Soar. He picked up the heavy jug and banged it down again. "In my present mood, I'm thinking only of one thing. I say, to the devil with Keating and Keating's case. What you say may be all very true, but what I want to know is, where *I* stand with regard to this."

"You stand in a pretty bad position," replied Masters, grimly. "You stand in the position of accessory after the fact to the murder of Mr. Dartley—by your own confession before witnesses. That'll do for a starter."

"Accessory after the fact. God save the law," Soar said, with some heartiness. "I'll ask you again, Mr. Masters; will you believe that I never knew anything at all about this until an hour before my father died? And what did you expect me to do then? Expect me to rush out to Scotland Yard and say, 'Here, see what a good citizen I am. Here are all the facts; now hang a dead man and ruin me?' Whatever the law thinks about my citizenship, I presume it doesn't think I'm raving mad?"

Masters was bitter.

"You can use words, sir. All of you can, as slick as slick. But in the first place we've got no proof your father only told you this when he was dying——"

"Yes, I can give you that," interrupted Soar, a gleam of hope in his sallow face. "He wrote out a statement. It's in that jug, if you'll let me show you the trick of opening it. But whether or not it satisfies you, I don't suppose it will satisfy Derwent."

Ever since Soar's acknowledgment of the facts in the Dartley case, a certain reaction (possibly relief) had shaken Derwent. He tried to fight it; it was little more than a jerk or shiver, but Pollard suddenly realised that this stringy amused man was over seventy. They were all a little surprised to hear him speak with a quaver in his voice.

He said: "Must everybody think that I, of all people, do nothing but act on malice? I do not want you arrested, Soar. I don't want anybody arrested. What I was trying to do, as I patiently tried to show, was clear myself of suspicion in the murder of Dartley. So long as they accept that, I am not concerned with what they think otherwise. As for poor Keating's death, I am sorry for it but I am not afraid about it. It—ah—happens that I. . . ."

"Have an alibi," supplied Soar. For the first time he spoke in a friendlier tone, though there was despondency in it. "Yes, both you and Mrs. Derwent have alibis. Which means that I'm left holding the baby in both cases. Even if they don't think I'm accessory after the fact in Dartley's murder, they may think I'm the actual villain of the piece in Keating's." He appeared to come to a decision; there was in his face a light like fanaticism, or inspiration. "There may be a way to convince you," he told Masters. "If I were you, Inspector, I should lose no more time. I should search this house."

"Nonsense," said Derwent. "There is nobody here except us. Why should there be?"

"Because you brought him, unfortunately. You played a neat little trick, Derwent, to get the police here. Look at it! 'There will be ten teacups at number 5b, Lancaster Mews on Thursday, August 1st, at 9.30 p.m. precisely.' Since the murderer didn't write it, don't you think he would be interested in it and why it was written? Don't you think he might have dropped in to inquire? . . . What do you say, Sir Henry?"

"It's a possibility," acknowledged H.M. "You just thought of that; didn't you, son?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Well . . . now. I doubt whether you'd have stood there so freely and blithely, with the door to the hall open, tellin' us things that knock the murderer's ten-teacups' scheme higher than blazes, if you thought he might be standin' out in that hall listening, with a gun in his hand. I told you, Masters, we had to hear about this. We had to hear about Dartley, or we shouldn't 'a' known where we stood. But I also tell you that for the past ten minutes I've been sittin' here with gooseflesh up my back like a nutmeg grater."

Soar smiled bleakly. "No, it doesn't worry me. Besides, you forget this murderer can appear and disappear when he likes. Maybe he's gone. Or perhaps he hasn't chosen to show himself just yet; it can't be quite 9.30. But if he really wants to turn a hoax round on us, it's a pity he doesn't choose to appear now."

Softly and steadily through the main hall of the house, the front-door knocker began to rap.

Masters afterwards declared that there was no man in the room, possibly including H.M. himself, who did not have his heart in his mouth. The rapping of the knocker rose above a swish of rain on the windows; it left off and began again immediately.

"That's not our people," said the chief inspector. "They're not to move until I blow the whistle or give a light signal. Here." He turned to Pollard. "Go to the front door and take this torch. Let in—whoever it is. Bring whoever it is back here; but don't let anybody out. When you've done that, go to the front door again; give two flashes of the torch, and then three. That'll bring Wright and Banks. Hop to it."

The unused hall was very dark; but a fanlight over the door let in a faint glow from the mews outside. Pollard passed the newel-post of a staircase on his right. To his left he heard a mellow ticking, which had a velvety sound in the rawness of the house; briefly, he flashed his light on the dial of a grandfather clock, to see that it was five minutes past nine. Then he opened the front door.

The red tail-light of a taxi was just bumping away in the mews. In the doorway, silhouetted against a gas-spark and silver skeins of rain, stood a Rubensesque woman in a white velvet wrap which came high up round her neck. Above it the heavy-piled golden hair gleamed low on the neck.

"Is this Mr. Benjamin Soar's house?" asked the large blonde, melodiously.

"Yes, madam."

"I am Mrs. Jeremy Derwent. Is my husband here?"

"Yes, madam. Will you come inside, please?"

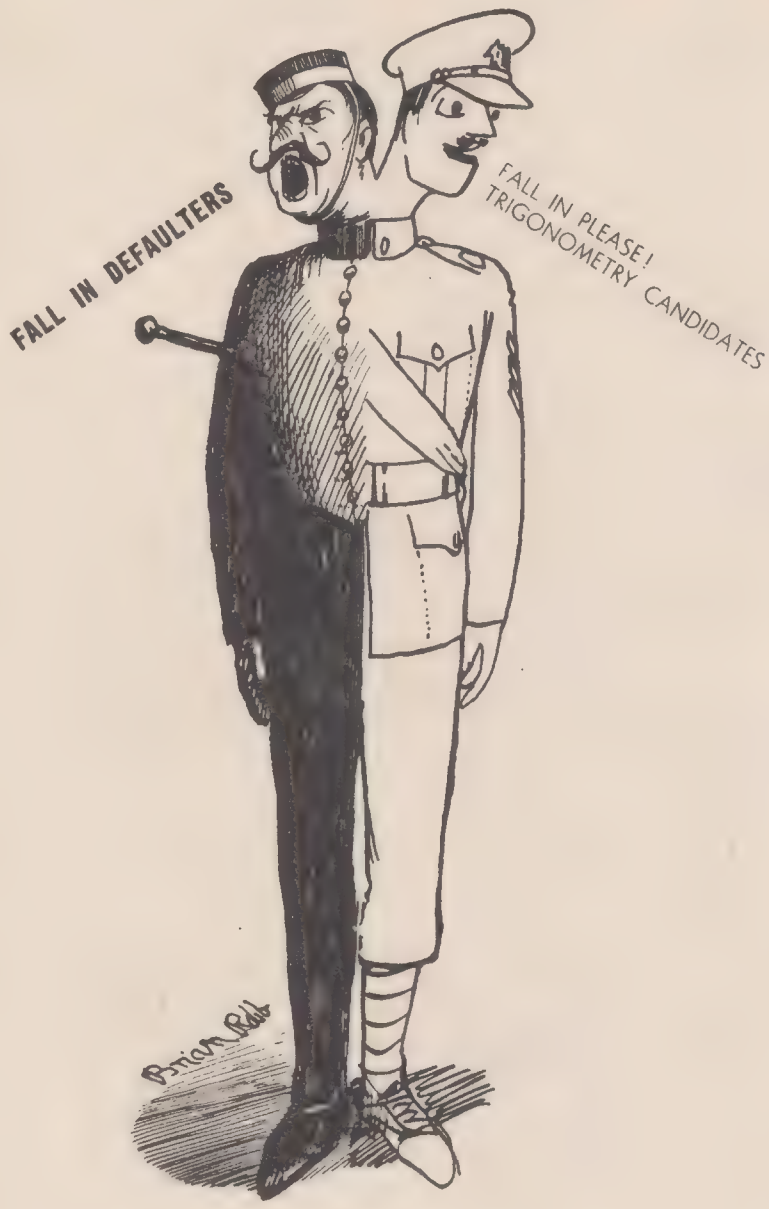
She studied him in the gloom with her head a little on one side. Although he could not make out her features, even a flicker of heavy eyelids, he sensed humour.

"But what a butler!" she said. "Surely you are the young police officer who made such terribly determined efforts to see me this afternoon? In the circumstances, I really don't think I need come in. If——"

"Your taxi has gone," said Pollard, as she turned away. "You will get wet. I think you had better come in." He reached out and closed his fingers round her arm, which was a smooth, soft arm, under the wrap. "I am *not* making love to you,

(*please turn over*)


# TIMES CHANGE

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## *Continuing* Ten Teacups

### *by* Carter Dickson

Mrs. Derwent, and I warn you that if you let out a yip this time, it'll be heard only by our men in the street."

"Mrs. Derwent, sir," he said at the door of the library and saw that he had produced a sensation.

He saw their faces craned, although he had been told to return to the front door and he was afraid he might not hear anything else. Pollard swore under his breath, wondering what might be the revealing first words at that interview. The ticking of the grandfather clock was loud in the front hall. Poking his neck out intc the wet, Pollard flashed the torch down twice, and then three times. After a few seconds' silence, two figures materialised out of the drizzle, moved across the mews, and closed in on the front door. Sergeant Banks he knew fairly well; Plain-clothes man Wright was known as a good man.

Banks closed the door and drew Pollard aside. He spoke so low that his words were not as loud as the ticking of the clock.

Banks said: "What the hell's going on around here? I've just been round the beats, I never heard of so many coppers assembled in one place since the battle of Sidney Street. (Brrh! Can we smoke in here?) Did you know His Nibs has been having everybody in this business tailed since afternoon? Yes; well, most of 'em have wound up here, or hereabouts. We only just found that out. That lawyer, Derwent, is inside. Soar is inside. And now some woman—Mrs. Derwent, I'm pretty sure."

"Look here, since they've all been tailed. . . . Yes, Derwent's here; and Soar's here; but who was the third man who let himself in by the side door at a quarter-past eight?"

"I don't know," said Banks. "Nobody seems to know. But do you know a fellow named Gardner?"

"Is *he* in the house?"

"No, he's not in the house. Do you know what he's doing? He's sitting up on top of a wall with Constable Mitchell. This Gardner is wise and he's been wise all day to the fact that Mitchell was tailing him. He led Mitchell one beggar of a dance. Clear across town to the Tower of London; all through every exhibit in the Tower; back again by way of Cheapside to St. Paul's; clear up a hundred million stairs into the dome of St. Paul's; three times round the Whispering Gallery—Mitchell thought he heard smart remarks floating out of the air in the Whispering Gallery—back again by bus to Westminster Abbey. . . . Well, he kept up that kind of thing until he came here tonight. Then he waited for Mitchell to catch up to him and said, 'Look here, my lad, I've given you an instructive day with an opportunity to improve your mind; but we both want companionship now, so let's sit down and see what happens.' They've been sitting up on top of a warehouse wall under a tree, smoking cigarettes and talking about guns. I ask you again, what's going *on*?"

"God knows. What about Philip Keating?"

"I can't tell you. No sign of him anywhere near here, though, as far as I can find out."

"Then who's the third man in the house? You're certain he went in and didn't come out, are you?"

"Positive. I don't know who he is; that's not my job. My job——"

"Yes; I was forgetting. Come in to the Chief Inspector."

In the library, the yellow shade of the lamp was now tilted slightly, but it did not give much more light. Janet Derwent sat in the chair previously occupied by her husband, who stood behind her. The white velvet wrap was thrown back, revealing a very low-cut silver gown which flashed as she moved.

Masters, without commenting on the news about Gardner, gave them their orders outside.

He closed the door with unnecessary violence, and turned back.

"Now then, ma'am! Do you still refuse to tell us why you came here tonight?"

"But my dear Mr. Masters." She spoke with low, melodious, almost pleading gentleness. "You're putting me so horribly in the wrong, aren't you? You know I don't refuse to do anything the police tell me to do. You ought to know that, after all we've been through together——"

Masters's voice grew harsh.

"Stow it, lady. Stow it right here and now. You've walked in on us, when we didn't ask you," as he spoke, her knuckles went up slowly to her full lips; "and, now that you're here, you're going to answer some questions before you get out."

"Jeremy, darling, has he the right to talk to me like that?"

"No, my dear."

"Are you going to let him talk to me like that, Jeremy?"

"Yes, my dear," said Derwent.

"Well, I suppose I must put up with being bullied," said Mrs. Derwent, looking round quickly, "But I really think it's too bad, when all I tried to do in coming here was what a wife should and take care of my husband——"

"You came here to-night to take care of Mr. Derwent?"

"But of course! What else?" She slid her hand up gently and took Derwent's hand, which was on the back of the chair. "Of course I wouldn't have mentioned such a thing until you dragged it out of me; but we have the strictest doctor's orders; and poor Jeremy isn't as young as he might be, and sometimes he's a little——"

"Janet," said Derwent. The slight quaver and loosening he had shown a while ago were now gone; he was his dry, urbane self. "What do you mean, exactly? Do you mean touched in the head? Feeble-minded? Mad?"

"No, of course not! Nothing of the kind. Only——" She looked slowly up at him, exposing the full line of her throat; and, to the stupefaction of the others, she added the following revolting question: "Diddums need to take care of ums nice old husband?"

Yet this was to be noticed. Such was the enormous physical vitality of the woman, dominating that room, that it paled the ironic self-possession of her husband. It made him look ineffectual. She was deliberately playing off that vitality against him, and succeeding. Before Masters had time to think, she turned round again.

"So if he does write you notes saying that he's the head of some shocking organisation like this Ten Teacups," said Mrs. Derwent, "where they say women do the most dreadful things—well, you will try not to believe him, won't you? Or, if you must believe him, I am sure you will give him a fair trial and see that his age is taken into consideration? Promise me, Mr. Masters."

Masters blinked. Up on the floor over their heads, faint footsteps had begun to stir back and forth, up and down, as Banks and Wright searched. They advanced, they retreated, they died away altogether, and came back again. By this time those footfalls were beginning to have an odd effect on Pollard, for they should have tracked down *something*. Evidently they were having an effect on Soar. Soar had sat down in his favourite chair away from the light, where he shook a little and twice glanced sharply at the ceiling when the steps passed. H. M. remained wooden.

"We haven't quite got your husband in the dock yet, Mrs. Derwent," the chief inspector pointed out. "Where did you learn about this note your husband wrote?"

"But I read it, of course."

She leaned back in the chair as though relaxing. Her breast had been heaving a little, with a certain subdued excitement she had shown since she entered here. But now she became quiet, speculative—what was the word;—almost boneless; lying back as Pollard had pictured her lying back last night in the limousine, and studying Masters.

"He showed it to you, ma'am?"

"How absurd!" She smiled. "When I returned last night from that journey which you and I so much enjoyed, I saw that Jeremy had given Arabella, our maid, a letter to take out to the post-box so that it should be delivered early in the morning. I saw that it was addressed to Sir Henry Merrivale"—she never once looked towards H. M.—"and, since the flap was imperfectly gummed down, I did so wish to make sure that the dear boy did not inadvertently do himself some mischief. . . . Are you so terribly shocked? My dear Humphrey, if you tried to arrest all the women who read their husbands' correspondence there would not be enough jails in England to hold them. Doesn't *your* wife read your correspondence, Humphrey?"

"Never you mind my wife, ma'am." Masters looked at her with sudden suspicion. "You thought *who* might 'inadvertently do himself some mischief?'"

"My husband," she replied, reaching up again to hold Derwent's hand.

"What made you think he might?"

"You did, Humphrey, during our *tête-à-tête*."

"Oh? I mentioned Mr. Derwent?"

"No, but you talked a tremendous lot about the Ten Teacups."

"Just so, ma'am; I was coming to that. You've said yourself, a minute ago, that you knew certain things about a certain secret society, of whose existence you know, called the Ten Teacups. What else can you tell me about it?"

There was a silence, while every person watched the trap.

"Oh, come Humphrey!" urged Mrs. Derwent, fixing her eyes on him and speaking with gentle, melodious scoffing. "You know perfectly well there isn't any such thing."

"How do you know that?"

"I don't; but you seem so terribly eager to get me to say there is such a thing, that I feel certain there can't be. Don't tease me, Humphrey, please."

"And may I ask," demanded Masters uncontrollably, "how the blazes you happen to know my first name?"

"I rang up your wife, and told her what a nice man you are. She told me things about you. If you ever try to put me into one of those dreadful boxes at any inquest and try to tell them I said anything at all to you, I shall have a nice character-witness against you."

"They don't have character-witnesses at inquests, Mrs. Derwent."

"Oh?" cooed the other. "Aren't you glad?"

"And you know nothing about the Ten Teacups?"

"Nothing except what you've told me."

Masters turned. "Although," he said suddenly, "the gold cloth that was draped across the table in the room where Mr. Vance Keating was murdered was delivered to you, and was last known to be in your hands?"

"Stuff! Does that prove I know anything about any teacups?"

"Answer the question, please."

"What question, Humphrey, dear?"

"Do you deny receiving the gold cloth?"

"But of course not!"

"Who sent it to you?"

"Poor Vance had it sent to me, only the day before he—he passed away——"

"We happen to know, you see, that that isn't true."

Her beautiful face expressed astonishment and concern. "But didn't he? Then Mr. Soar has been telling the most dreadful falsehoods, or rather his assistant has; or perhaps it was Arabella the maid. They said it was poor Vance and how should I know any different?"

"Yes. We know you received it. But what did you do with it afterwards?"

"Why, it was so tremendously valuable. . . . You know, of course, that no decent woman who valued her good name could ever dream of taking such an expensive present from any man, except her husband. Naturally I could not accept it. So I gave it to my husband, to lock in his safe until he could return it to Vance." She leaned back and threw her head round so that she could see Derwent; at the same time her hand tightened on his. "I suppose he did put it away, for I haven't seen it since. *Did you, darling?*"

"Yes," said Derwent.

There was a sharp knock at the door, and Sergeant Banks poked his head in.

"Excuse me, sir," he growled to Masters, "but would you come out here for a second. It's something pretty serious."

The chief inspector was so intent on this fresh evasion, glaring from Derwent to the decorous placidity of Mrs. Derwent, that he was on the verge of ordering Banks away: but Banks' expression stopped him. He went out into the hall; Pollard followed, and shut the door.

In one hand Banks had a big electric lamp, and in the other a crumpled newspaper held like a bowl in his palm. He flashed the light on its contents. The first was a .32 calibre automatic pistol. The second was a pair of white kid evening gloves, man's gloves, smudged in a certain way. The third was a knife or dagger, eight inches long, with a heavy grooved, double-edged blade, with a silver cross-piece and an ebony handle. Someone had evidently tried to wipe it and clean it in the newspaper, but there were traces of blood up as far as the cross-piece.

"This thing has been used within the last hour," said Masters heavily. "Where did you find it?"

"Found the lot wrapped up in this paper, shoved away on the shelf of a cupboard in an upstairs front bedroom," answered Banks. "The trouble is——"

"Well?"

"It's been used right enough, sir," said Banks. "The trouble is—Wright and I have combed every square inch of this place; upstairs and down and everywhere and except for the people you know, there's nobody else in the house at all."

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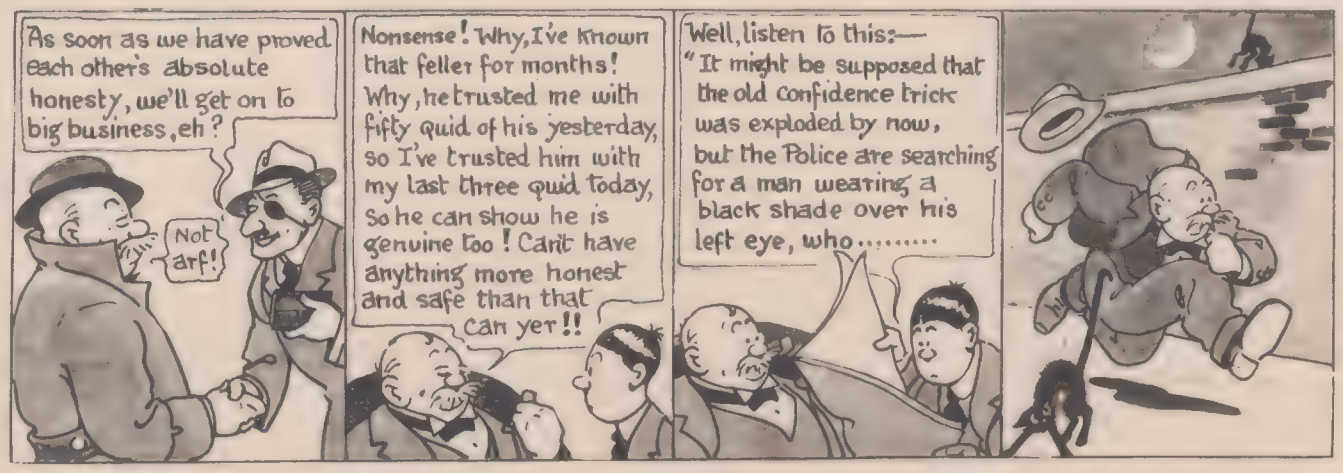

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P.S.3

I AM back in London after four days at sea, which passed so quickly that I was in England almost before I realised that I had left the United States.

Among the interesting people I met on the way home were film technicians from Hollywood, whose conversation at dinner one evening reminded me of something I wrote some months ago about a discussion between William Powell and Clark Gable on the ideal wife.

Well, these two film men told me that the Hollywood girls have "been handing it back." They readily announce to the world that there is no such thing as an ideal husband, and merely concentrate on classifying the types of men they dislike most.

The most devastating part of their counterblast was fired during a quiet interlude on the set of *Dead End*, when Sylvia Sidney, Claire Trevor, and Wendy Barrie got together to compose a list of their prejudices. Collectively, they declare, among other things, that men should not:

Use toothpicks, remove their coats when wearing braces, wear violently coloured socks or neckties, keep a woman waiting, be too, too charming, or fail to rise when a woman enters the room.

Claire Trevor then said she didn't like men who wore their hair cut too closely, had loud laughs, wore very pointed shoes and displayed hairy chests by going about with their shirts unbuttoned.

Wendy Barrie sees red every time she meets a flirtatious man. Also, she doesn't like "superior" men, and prefers men who aren't too good-looking to handsome fellows. She hates to see a man in high-waisted trousers and she doesn't like them to wear diamond rings.

Sylvia Sidney despises male gossips. If

MODEL BY HELENE HUBERT, PARIS

# Virginia Hall's Page

she hears that a man has been gossiping, she will have nothing more to do with him. She doesn't like men who wear homburg hats and she can't stand the type of man who wears an overcoat with a fur collar. And as for me—well, it's best left unsaid.

Among the Christmas gifts awaiting me at home was a handbag that has since been admired by everyone who has seen it. Yet it is so simple that it is child's play to copy. I have already made another like it in black velvet for a really capacious evening bag.

The original is made in black antelope and is shaped like the bundle that Dick Whittington carried on his stick when he walked into London town. It can be used as a muff, and is so roomy that you can stuff it full of all the bits and pieces we all love so well and still not look ill-treated. What more can you want?

This is how you can make one like it. Take a piece of suède, felt, or cloth measuring 24 in. long and 12 in. broad. Double this in two so that you have a square of 12 in. by 12 in. and join up the two sides for 6 in.

From the top of this stitching cut away a little of the material, sloping it so that the top edges will measure about 8 or 9 in. each. Join these top edges and then make a lining exactly the same size; slip this in and sew neatly round the openings at each side.

Through these openings thread a piece of the material measuring about twelve inches long by three inches wide and tie a knot so that the top edge is gathered up. Attach a purse to a piece of ribbon and sew the other end to the inside of the bag. There you are, the bag is finished.

You will find that the knot at the top is like a handle and you can put your hands in the slips at the sides when you want to use it as a muff.

I find that this shape of handbag is particularly practical, for you can slip your hand right through the slits and it is then possible to use that hand, knowing at the same time that it is impossible to have your bag stolen or to lose anything from it.

Here's a new way to cook and serve celery. Cut the celery into pieces (about four pieces from one stalk), boil in water, or chicken stock if you have it. Allow it to cool; cut up into small pieces, add pepper and salt and cover it with oil and vinegar. This makes a delicious vegetable with cold meat.

IF you give a thought to it you can be really original about the linoleum covering your floors. I don't mean that you can choose a design that few other people may care about, but you can have your own personal pattern. I saw a floor covering the other day that was most attractive.

It was in a kitchen, the walls of which were painted a deep primrose. The linoleum was dark blue—almost navy—and quite patternless, but into one corner had been inlaid a simple geometrical pattern in strips of yellow to correspond with the walls.

Merely two squares of yellow linoleum, about two inches wide, interlacing each other on the background of blue, but the effect was excellent. And I thought of all the unsuspected possibilities thereof. What about your monogram on the corner of your kitchen floor?

Just an outline of what our outlines should be:

"August collections hinted showing figure; midseasons shout it. Loose, bulky clothes out, except for Vionnet, who clings to her own perfected ideas. . . . Look for tight-fitting line from top of hip-bones to under bust, pulling waist and diaphragm in and making bust stand out. . . . Molyneux short day jackets fitted skin-tight, zipped front emphasising wide shoulders, narrow waist. . . . Day dresses soft, clinging, revealing, with shirring round bust, giving breathing space . . . Allure runs rampant in evening, bringing back bare shoulders, visible bosoms, delicate waists."

The other day Eileen and I were discussing fur coats. I was saying that I'd like one of those new boxy skunk coats that are so fashionable, but Eileen didn't agree with me.

"I met a girl wearing one the other day and it smelt most peculiar," she said.

Well, all I could say to that was that nowadays skunk *never* smells. I left Eileen to think what she liked about my remark, for I am quite sure that often it's the girl who wears the skunk who needs the treatment far more than the fur!

And this treatment is so very simple too, for there is a new preparation performing its function in a delightfully different way. This product comes in ice form, and will keep you as cool and as fresh as its name implies. It checks perspiration and the odour coming with it effectively and is as easy to use as a cream. Its light, melting texture is soothing and refreshing to the skin, and ensures instant protection, lasting from one to three days.

This deodorant ice neither dries up the pores nor injures them in any way. It merely draws them together and closes them, diverting the secretion to less restricted parts of the body, where it can evaporate as soon as it appears.

To make you realise, personally, how excellent and necessary it is for *everyone* to use this new deodorant ice, which solves a real and common problem and ensures all-time daintiness, I have made a special arrangement with the makers to let you have a generous sample.

On receipt of 4½d. in stamps, I will see that one of these samples is sent to you, post free. Please mark your envelope "Ice." I know that once having tried it you will not risk being without it.

Parmain, a little town not far from Paris, should become a mecca to women the world over. For it is to have a statue of Marcel Raoul, inventor of the Marcel wave.

A modest hairdresser, Marcel lived with his mother in Paris sixty years ago. She was a handsome old woman with beautiful white hair that had such a lovely natural wave that her son would look at it and think, "If I could reproduce that, I could make my fortune."

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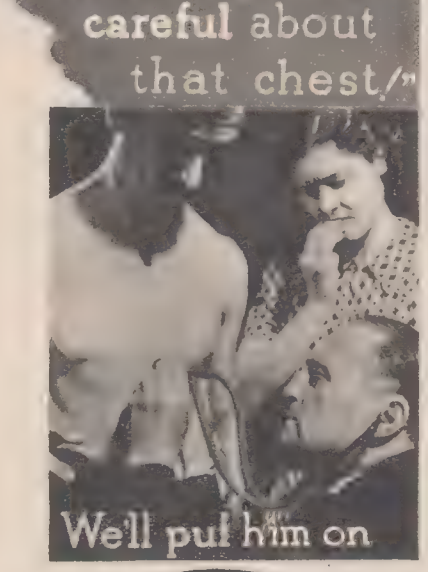


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# MIGHTY HUSH-HUSH MYSTERY

**Honourable Babu might well ask what use is pen without adequate push if a pen-pusher is to show that crime doesn't pay**

## BY LESLIE BERESFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED SINDALL

MUNSHIR KHAN, chief-inspector of police in the Derabagh area, let fall a true Islamic curse, which was not in the least muffled by his curled beard and sweeping moustache. These bristled in wrath, ill-concealed if quickly repressed, the while he greeted the podgy little personality ambling towards him across the court-yard of the ancient palace at Jabha.

"And what brings you here, O Ram-chandra Dass?" he wasted not an instant in asking, impatience in his bluff voice. "Why should Derabagh be deprived, if only for one hour of so exalted a presence as yours?"

"Call of duty demands, inspectorjee, that Delaunay sahib should see urgently an important document from Delhi, having nature of official secrets act," explained the babu breathlessly, the while expanding his corpulence with what doubtless he intended to be dignity, as became the chief-clerk of police head-quarters in so important a district.

"Therefore, being *persona grata* in the handling of such matters, I am arriving to hand same to Delaunay sahib in hush-hush fashion," he added, asking: "And how, Khanjee, proceeds affair of these badmash who threaten to disturb Rajah sahib's peaceful rejoicings for continuity of old age?"

"The affair is in my hands, babu," the Khan remarked frigidly.

The ancient enmity between these two, Moslem and Hindu, poles apart even in their activities, yet linked always by loyalty to Captain Delaunay sahib and the honour of the service to which they belonged, was never entirely laid aside. The proud Pathan blood of the Khan boiled always at sight of his Hindu pen-driving colleague, who, nevertheless—and despite obvious physical disadvantages—had so many times scored against him in cases of criminal detection.

Memory of these caused him now to suspect the sudden and unheralded arrival of Ramchandra here, when rightly he should have been sitting in his office at Derabagh. Doubtless he thought this important secret document an excuse to poke his blunted nose in here. The Khan flung him a warning.

"The trouble-seekers are in my hands, O weaver of words in ink," he said tersely. "There is no reason for you to waste government time interfering. This is no more than a matter for strong police action, which I am now taking. Go—take your hush-hush document to Delaunay sahib, who will doubtless receive you after his interview with the Rajah, which now occupies him."

Ramchandra's spectacled eyes surveyed the ancient pillared courtyard, at one end of which open doors showed a large hall. Within this, at a distance, could be seen the smart military figure of the police-chief, together with that of the old, white-bearded Rajah. The latter, a petty-chief with little landed territory but considerable wealth, was on the eve of celebrating his diamond jubilee.

He was a greatly respected old man, his lineage going far back in history, and once of much greater dominion. Circumstances had long since reduced the dominion, while leaving still great wealth, and—above all—fierce pride of family. He was anxious that his jubilee celebrations, at which the provincial governor and some native rulers were to be present, should be a fitting and a proud success.

Hence his urgent message of a day since, asking for strong police protection from Delaunay sahib. So far the Khan only knew that the Rajah feared the violent interruption of mysterious enemies anxious to discredit him. The Khan had no doubt whatever that, with the police arrangements he was already perfecting, any such attempt would be swiftly and ruthlessly crushed. He outlined these to Ramchandra, more than anything to keep the little babu in his place.

"With so many police here and there, inspectorjee, where shall be room for crowd to see celebrations?" the latter bleated, chewing eternally the betel-nut. "Maybe this is not matter for so much marching of men. I am of humble opinion that here we have mystery of hush-hush nature, requiring procedure of more active work for grey-matter in cranium—"

"And why should you suggest that, babu?" enquired the terse voice of Delaunay sahib, who had joined them unobserved. He showed no surprise over finding his head-clerk here, knowing there must be good reason for it. He knew, too, that Ramchandra was never to be ignored if he offered a diagnosis in a criminal case.

"Honoured sir," the babu salaamed, "after your nobility and the Khan left Derabagh hastily for here, I duly considered the matter. I remember that, some five or six years ago, there was trouble in Jabha over forcible abduction of beautiful female named Ziha, wife of shop-keeper here. Shop-keeper was slaughtered by nefarious person, name unknown, and whole affair became—as I was saying to the Khan—of hush-hush nature——"

"Asking your honour's pardon," the Khan interrupted here, impatiently, "what can an affair of so long ago have to do with the matter bringing us here?"

"Actually, Khan, the babu is right," Delaunay responded. "I have only just, in fact, learnt the whole truth from the Rajah. It appears that, ever since that affair he has been blackmailed by a gang of people, professing to have proof that his son and heir, Tilat Rao, was behind both the abduction and the murder. These people are threatening to expose him publicly when the provincial governor is here."

The Khan stiffened. His beard bristled afresh and the glare of his eyes was sultry. The sharp note of reproof in Delaunay sahib's voice had not missed its mark. Both of them knew, of course, that Delaunay sahib was well aware of the vendetta between them; the zest of the one to make the other look foolish. The Khan made no attempt to hide his professional aloofness at the moment.

"The Protector of the Poor has spoken," he observed with a punctilious salute. "Since this matter is deeper than I had imagined, and the babu knows the length and breadth of it, maybe he is in a position to tell us from his profound wisdom who may be these persons behind the trouble?"

"Easy to say who 'may be,' inspectorjee," Ramchandra was swift to smile in his simple way, though his spectacled eyes had a sharp glint in them. "Difficulty shall be to find out for certain 'who *is*.' Not so easy. However, having made strict examination of records regarding abduction of female, Ziha, before coming here from Derabagh, I have suspicious eye on one person, honoured and respected, sir——"

He was at the moment profoundly salaaming his chief, but was prevented from saying anything further by a great bustle. There had arrived some three or four men, one of them an obese silk-clad native of caste, a young fellow in his thirties, smiling sleekly. He saluted and began to talk with Delaunay, the Khan and Ramchandra standing apart.

"Araminda Rao, nephew of Rajah, coming doubtless to condone with exalted uncle over threat to peaceful celebrations," Ramchandra remarked under his breath.

"Actually, babu, Araminda Rao has already given me great assistance in the matter," the Khan informed tersely. "With his advice I am having observation kept on certain people, known leaders of unrest——"

"Keeping eye on servants is not capturing masters, inspectorjee," Ramchandra interrupted. "If I may offer word of advice——"

"When I need that, babu, I will ask for it!" the Khan bristled afresh, adding: "This time there will be required no interference from you, O owl of a pen-pusher.

At sight of him she became at once alive with surprise, ear-rings and anklets tinkling musically as she sprang to her feet. "What, then, brings my lord here without word?"

By the power and glory of Allah, I swear it. Between this night's sun-down and to-morrow's dawn these blackmailers shall be in my hands."

And, seeing that Delaunay sahib had rejoined the Rajah in the great hall, the Khan swung on his heel, going his way. He felt a great confidence now. He had a card up his sleeve about which Ramchandra knew nothing. For the Khan, after much wooing, both gentle and fierce, had at long last found himself victor over the whims and fancies of woman.

He had a date with Ahari, the lovely Hindu dancing girl, who had so often before been the secret ally of Ramchandra, helping him to unmask criminal conspiracies, of which rumours had reached her from some too talkative lover, or by means easy to so celebrated a queen of nautch. And Ahari, engaged with others for the celebrations, was here. To her, presently, the Khan purposed to repair himself, there to learn what he might extract from her in her new mood of surrender.

Meantime, oblivious of this and wrapped up in his own meditations, Ramchandra lingered in the courtyard. His spectacled eyes again watched those in the grand hall. The white-bearded Rajah and his slim, rather good-looking son, Tilat Rao; the obese and smiling Araminda Rao, gesturing as he talked; Delaunay sahib listening. Ramchandra drew nearer, a respectful and unobtrusive figure in the background, also using his ears.

"It goes too far!" The old Rajah was saying, his voice aquiver from age and emotion. "For the honour of the family and because I believe in the innocence of this my son, Tilat Rao, I have kept this thing secret. I will pay no more, as I have told their emissary. Yet, if this scandal truly arises, I shall die of shame——"

"You must not fear for that, Highness," Delaunay sahib intervened, soothingly, and had now caught sight of Ramchandra, whom he beckoned, presenting him to the Rajah.

"This is my head-clerk, Highness. He has been looking up the records of that case five or six years ago and is well acquainted with the facts. He was telling me just now that he had formed suspicions as to the identity of at least one person connected with this blackmailing conspiracy——"

"Of that, honoured sir," Ramchandra salaamed, "it would not be wise to speak openly at this moment, if I may say so."

"And why not?" intervened the smooth voice of the smiling, obese Araminda, gesturing impatience. "Here, we are all of the family of His Highness, suffering with him this feat of wrongful scandal."

"True, sir!" Ramchandra gestured in turn, and shrugged. "Suspicion is not certainty. In such matter of criminal hush-hush as this, methods of protection for His Highness must be hush-hush also. Perhaps I am wrong and certainty may not be reached. But if I may be permitted to question on one matter only, it might be helpful. Surely, since these payments have been made by His Highness, someone must have received them in person, and so been seen?"

"Just such another as you, babu," intervened the Rajah's son, Tilat Rao. "Also, like you, he wore spectacles, but he had a thick black beard. I myself have seen him, at a place appointed by him. Yet we have searched Jabha for that black bearded man, without any sign of him——"

"A pity you did not have the fellow arrested then and there, Highness," Delaunay sahib said with cold sense, and added: "Of course, it is that fear of exposure on which the blackmailer counts for perfect safety. Well, we have three days yet before the celebrations. We must see what we can do towards unearthing these mysterious people."

A few moments later, with Ramchandra ambling by his side, he passed out of the palace. He turned to the latter.

"It was perhaps a wise thing that you came here, babu," he said. "I know that you and the Khan do not see eye to eye over many things, but in this—for the credit of the service—I hope you will work together. At all costs the honour of the Rajah must be left unsullied, you understand? Keep in touch with the Khan, and—if you can help him from your knowledge of this matter——"

"I am always desirous, honourable sir, of giving poor assistance to chief-inspector, if he will receive same. If now he should refuse, I am like almighty Nelson, turning unseeing optic on him, and holding fort alone," Ramchandra said, just then opening the brown leather despatch-case he was carrying, and added:

"Meantime, with permission, I am handing over secret document from Delhi, which——"

He became suddenly silent, his fat and moon-round face expressive of quivering agitation. Staring at the contents of the leather holder, he gasped in tones of great shock:

"How are mighty fallen! Secret document is not here at all, nor is this my case! What can have happened?"

"You appear to have lost case and document, babu," Delaunay expounded the situation tersely. "That is serious. It is also astoundingly unusual for you to be so careless——"

"Never before has such a thing happened!" Ramchandra protested, then seemed to find explanation in a flash: "I understand now, honoured sir. During rail-journey from Derabagh I was indeed engaged in chin-wag with Bengali gentleman, who also had similar case. Must have become accidentally exchanged on arrival during struggle for supremacy to alight on platform. At once, having idea where he may be found, I fly like lightnings of Jove——"

Before Delaunay could speak, if only to ask him—as he naturally intended to do—what the secret document was about, Ramchandra Dass had vanished from sight. Dusk had now fallen, and the small city of Jabha teemed with people already in festive mood, eagerly looking forward to the forthcoming jubilee celebrations, even enjoying themselves meanwhile well in advance.

They knew nothing, naturally, of the shadow overhanging their old and deservedly beloved ruler. And their excited jostle considerably impeded the progress of Ramchandra's scurrying little figure. Yet, as soon as he was well out of reach of Delaunay sahib and the Rajah's palace, that scurry lessened, though not altogether through stress of the crowd.

His distress over the loss of his precious secret paper also seemed curiously to have less hold on him, for gradually a smile creased his pale, moonlike face. It increased as he caught sight of Munshir Khan outside the main *thana*. The Moslem chief-inspector was in earnest conference with uniformed underlings, and a number of patrols were being mustered for duty.

It would have been an excellent opportunity for the little babu to obey his chief's instructions and keep in touch with the Khan. Since the latter had derided him as "an owl of a pen-pusher," Ramchandra felt fully justified in upholding his own status and sense of judgment, as against the Khan's method which set many policeman's feet tramping—for nothing.

"Am I a jackal, that I should find food for the cheetah?" Ramchandra asked himself, as he turned into the courtyard of a largish house and made his way up some stairs in semi-darkness.

It was a sort of caravanserai, used by travellers staying awhile in the city, and the lower part especially was lit by oil-flares, against the glow of which figures of men and women moved in black silhouette. Ramchandra carefully avoided these and slithered around unseen until, throwing open a door, he waddled into a lighted room.

Here his spectacled eyes embraced with admiration and eagerness the purpose of his visit—the supple, sari-enshrouded shape of Ahari, famous and lovely queen of nautch. At sight of him she became at once alive with surprise; ear-rings and anklets tinkling musically as she sprang to her feet.

"What then brings my lord here without word?" she questioned under her breath, and added: "Within this hour I am expecting that Moslem inspector, Munshir Khan——"

"Am I jealous, oh pearl of pearls?" Ramchandra beamed. "Do I not already know that he will surely seek you tonight, after he has set out his police. Therefore I came, so that we arranged together what words you shall whisper in his foolish ear. But first——"

He glanced around, to make sure that his words could not be overheard, before adding:

"That basest of all Bengalis, Dutt, is here. Did my choicest of all flowers learn anything from him in Derabagh?"

"Could he gainsay me, lord of my heart?" she gurgled with laughter, and then was very serious as her hands touched his with a tender caress. "He was indeed here but an hour gone, for I heard him speaking angrily down below. Someone, he said, had stolen something from him——"

"This, my jewel!" Ramchandra chuckled, exhibiting the case which was not his own. "It being very like one I carried and desirous to see what it contained, I let him take mine. As a result——"

He drew Ahari towards him, reducing his voice to a mere whisper, which ran on like a rivulet for some time, interspersed by little exclamations and remarks from her. Till suddenly the sound of knocking on the door by which Ramchandra had entered stopped even their whispers. Ahari sprang to her feet, clutching at the little babu with fiercely agitated fingers.

"It is that Moslem inspector!" she said in alarm. "Quick! He must not find you here. There is a way—that door into the next room, which is empty——"

And while she spoke, she was at the other door, calling through the woodwork in a soft, cooing voice, silken as that of a dove:

"Who is it? Who seeks Ahari, the dancer?"

Then, at the muffled answer from without, she flung a searching glance over her shoulder. She was alone in the small room. At least—till she had opened the door, admitting the swaggering figure of Munshir Khan.

"Thou art truly the light of mine eyes, Ahari!" he greeted her. "Allah should

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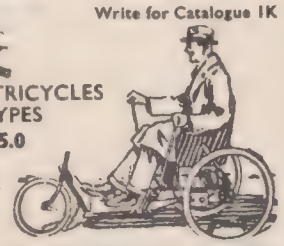

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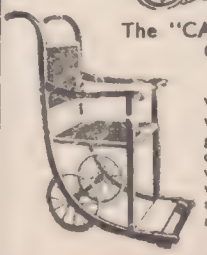

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*Continuing* **Mighty Hush-Hush Mystery** *by* **Leslie Beresford**

have made thee one of the faithful, and not born an infidel. However, the ways of Allah are wise. Certainly he meant that I should win your love, that such beauty might not be wasted on that son of a Bengali donkey, Ramchandra Dass. He has not, I suppose, been here to-night?"

"Am I not the slave of my lord, and should I turn from the joy of his arms for those of another?" Ahari answered with adroitness, and laughed: "That babu—he amuses me only. Also, he has very many rupees hidden away, and they are a good price for which I am prepared to let him amuse me. If I desire love now, O fear of all criminals——"

"It is not of love that I came to speak to-night, Ahari, beautiful as thou art!" the Khan intervened. "I need thy help. As much for mine own honour and glory as to make that little babu look foolish in the eyes of Delaunay sahib, my chief. There is trouble for the Rajah——"

"I know," she nodded, and amazed him by telling the whole story, equally as well as the Khan knew it, yet that was not enough for him by a long way.

"But—who are these people?" he exclaimed impatiently. "That is what I must find out, and so am here. Hast thou no light to cast upon my darkness; no word thou hast heard from one or another, such as so often that little owl of a babu boasted as coming from you to his aid?"

"So he makes boast of it? He says perhaps that he alone has my secrets?" Ahari's voice thrilled on a note of scorn and then she laughed, laying her hands on those of the Khan.

"See . . . should I be able to have told you so much about Rajah sahib, if I did not know even more? And why indeed, should I not give the secret to you, oh lord of my lips, so that this very night you should have that honour and glory you seek, making the babu look foolish, by being first to capture those who seek to shame Rajah sahib?"

"Do this for me, Ahari, and more than love shall be thy reward at my hands!" exclaimed the Khan eagerly, his eyes aglitter. "Tell me who these people are, and where I shall find them this very night."

"Only this I can tell my lord. Let him take his men to the palace of Rajah sahib at the hour before midnight. By then, the dancing—for which I am here—will be over. Afterwards, when Rajah sahib is alone with his relatives, there will come a little man with a black beard to demand many rupees for those evil ones whom he alone knows and about whom he should be made to confess, not expecting police to be there."

"And, by Allah, he shall!" exclaimed the Khan, wasting now no time over caresses, but eager to busy himself on this piece of information.

For, but a while since, Delaunay sahib had spoken to him of this man with a black beard, acting as medium between his carefully hidden confederates and the old Rajah they were blackmailing. Doubtless, the Khan told himself, they would not imagine the Rajah had at last told the truth to the police, still keeping secret the shame he feared.

Making a last minute bid to force the so far refused payment, they would find themselves trapped. The Khan, forewarned, would take full credit for the trap. And, while Ahari went with others by native carriage to the palace, he busied himself with preparations for his coup.

Amid these, he found opportunity to send a message to Delaunay that he hoped to make a capture and when, so that—if the police-chief wished—he might be at the palace to witness it. There, eventually, the Khan himself arrived, and with him a half-dozen of his men. Like him, they did not wear uniform, but mingled unobtrusively with the palace officials and guests.

The dancing was then over, and guests were fast leaving. The Khan, with eyes and ears alert, moved freely. This way, he overheard a snatch of conversation between Araminda Rao and a small, fat Bengali which interested and amused him.

"You are indeed a fool, Dutt!" Araminda Rao was saying. "Bad enough to be talking to a stranger in a train, how much worse to let him take your leather-case in exchange for his empty one. And you don't know who he was, and can't find him? How then are you going to recover those important documents which your case contained? What is to happen?"

What the other replied, the Khan did not hear. He was chuckling over the folly of all Bengalis, having specially in mind that prince of wind-bags, Ramchandra Dass. What had happened to him, the Khan neither knew nor cared, being himself on the top of the world at the moment.

A fact with which he was the more delightedly impressed when suddenly—the family of the Rajah being now alone—he joined them, purposing now to disclose the information which had reached him. For, as he stepped into the room where they were gathered, he saw a sight which held him still. Everyone in the room was staring towards a door on the opposite side. The voice of Tilat Rao, the Rajah's son, broke a sudden silence with the words:

"It is he of the black beard."

Black and large was the beard the Khan saw waggling at the chin and neck of the small, squat figure approaching, carrying a brown leather hold-all carefully under one arm. The Khan, whose men were behind him, beckoned to them, but stayed them from intervening yet awhile. It was necessary first to allow the blackmailer to betray himself before witnesses.

The old Rajah set the ball rolling, to the Khan's great joy, stepping towards the other with a proud anger.

"So you come yet again, even though I said that not one more rupee would I pay you and those behind you?" his aged voice quavered in righteous scorn. "This time you will not be allowed to go free, as before. This time I shall send for the police to seize you and bring you to trial."

"Police, Highness, are already here. I have taken liberty of seeing to that," came a voice from behind that mask-like face, of which mostly spectacles and the large black beard were visible features.

But something in the voice caused Munshir Khan to start violently, and to wonder if his hearing were wrong. Yet again, in the next moment, his eyesight suffered a severe shock. For a hand was suddenly lifted, and the large black beard was removed.

"With apologies to your highness," the Rajah was addressed, "I am Ramchandra Dass, chief-babu at police headquarters. I am here to return to one Povinda Dutt, this leather case which belongs to him, and of which the contents, found by me, are this false but very excellent beard, as well as some strange and highly important papers."

"What nonsense is this?" shouted the fat little Bengali near to Araminda Rao. "It is no leather case of mine——"

"In the train, as we alighted at the station, it came into my possession after you and I talked during the journey," Ramchandra beamed.

"It is a lie!" raged the other, livid.

"Strange!" murmured Ramchandra. "In this case I find letter addressed to Povinda Dutt at Calcutta, from Araminda Rao at Jabha. Letter of great interest to Rajah sahib and also to police. Likewise, I find other papers concerning matter of shopkeeper and wife, Ziha, including written confession by Tilat Rao sahib, acknowledging both abduction of wife and murder of shop-keeper."

"That was forced from me by threats!" appealed the Rajah's son in passionate desperation.

From now on the Khan took a back seat. Delaunay examined the documents, which Ramchandra had drawn from the leather holdall. And, since their purport seemed so unmistakably plain, Araminda Rao thrust himself violently and arrogantly forward.

"Of what use is further secrecy?" he suggested, cynically. "It is indeed I who have guided this affair from the beginning, when my uncle took means to hush it up so as to save his son from shame. Those papers, captain sahib, make the case against him quite clear. He and my uncle should be proceeded against criminally, so that abduction and murder are proved and they be punished——"

"In order, of course, that each should be deprived of title and succession in your favour, Araminda Rao?" Delaunay diagnosed, with grim irony.

"It is the law!" muttered the other sullenly.

"It is also the law that blackmailers suffer punishment. Out of your own mouth, together with the evidence in this letter from you to Povinda Dutt, you stand accused of that crime."

"With your honour's kind permission," interposed Ramchandra, meekly, "he may be accused of still more."

"How can that be, babu?" Delaunay frowned. "The matter of the murder five years ago——"

"Honoured sir," the other explained. "Matter of murder is already decided elsewhere, as doubtless I should have reported earlier, only for excusable circumstance. In purposely absconding with leather case belonging to Dutt person, I left my own with him. I did not, however, leave the contents with him."

He had fished a folded paper from an inner pocket of his coat, handing this to Delaunay with salaams. The latter perused it, then turned to the Rajah with relief in his eyes.

"Your highness may now go forward with your jubilee celebrations, fearing nothing and rejoicing greatly," he said. "This document reports that a convict, serving a sentence in the Andaman Islands, has voluntarily confessed to committing both the abduction and murder concerned."

That this came as a shock to Araminda Rao was so obvious that nobody present could doubt his complicity. Ramchandra mightily pleased with himself, presently followed Delaunay with the Khan from the palace. Delaunay, however, had something to say.

"I can't quite see, babu, why you couldn't have told me the contents of that paper from Delhi, instead of running off as you did," he was inclined to complain. "It would have settled the matter——"

"Of the abduction and murder, honoured sir, yes," replied Ramchandra, humbly. "But—what of blackmail? That had to be definitely proved; also identity of blackmailers, so I thought it best to make confrontation of guilt in proper fashion."

"Proper fashion?" The Khan echoed sardonically.

"As per pen-pusher," responded the little babu, beaming through his spectacles as he added: "Of what use is pen, inspectorjee, without adequate push?"


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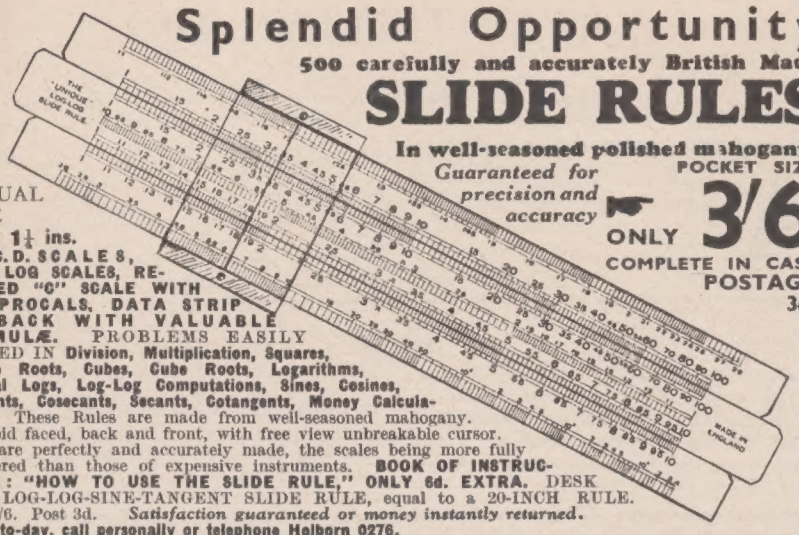

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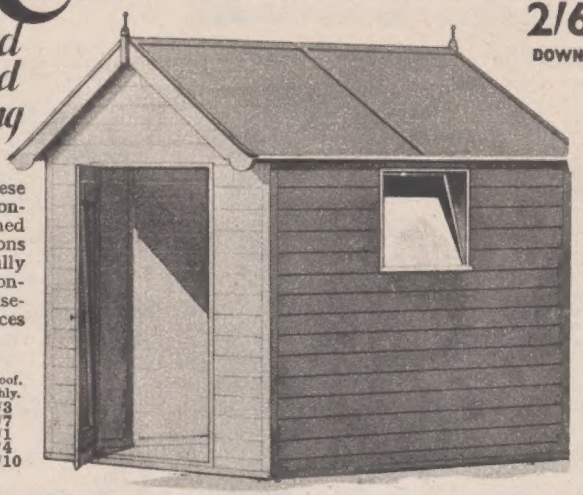

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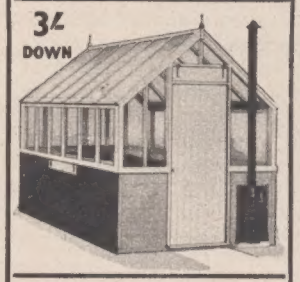

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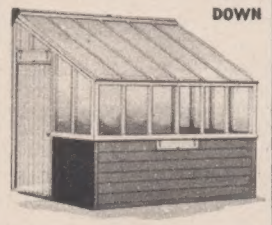

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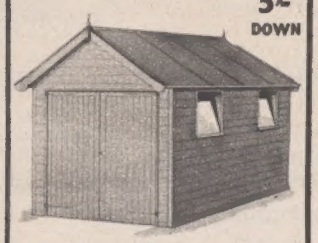

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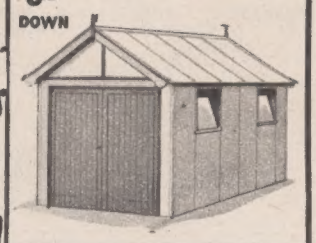

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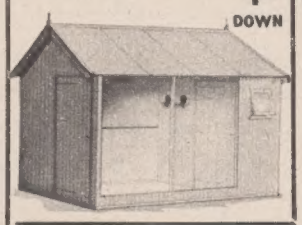

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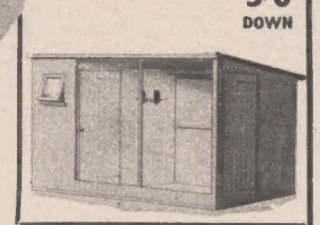

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In the factory William Gradely hired men; in the country he hired them and fired them and pensioned them off but he realised that until they approved of him things just weren't going to happen in the traditional way.

Like all the others who tried to gate-crash on Downland he had to go through a period of probation, knowing that every man's sleepy, questioning eyes were on him. We'll let Patrick Greene tell you how Gradely solved his problem, suddenly putting an end to suspicion and finding himself surrounded by deep friendliness and understanding. It is his story anyway.

Just fancy, if a merry band of convicts headed by a live wire naval man and quite a lot of other people had not set about making Australia a land fit for heroes, a hundred and fifty years ago next week, we might never have heard of body-line bowling, leatherjackets, Test Teams, and that notoriously screwy animal, the duck-billed platypus which lays eggs even though it is a mammal, has webbed feet with claws, a furry body, a beaver's tail, lives in a burrow in the river-bank, takes its food in the water and suckles its young.

But that is only the half of it as far as Australia is concerned; you can read the rest when Miles Henslow tells you how Australia throws a party to celebrate its birthday.

Mrs. W. E. Bee of 44 Colbert Avenue, Ilkley, has asked us to make it clear that she was not the contributor of a letter in the name of Mrs. Elsie Bee, published in THE PASSING SHOW of September 18. For any inconvenience the coincidence in names may have caused her, we ask her to accept our apologies.

# YOU'RE TELLING US!

YOU'RE TELLING US! Half a guinea is paid for each letter or quotation printed on this page. Address: "Readers' Letters," "Passing Show," 93 Long Acre, London, W.C.2. Please state whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss

ALL the days of our lives we have been bedevilled by people discussing the evils of "destructive criticism," yet we have never really got round to discovering what it meant. We dared to mention the matter once to a famous dramatic critic, feared for his acid-like destructive abilities, only to be told, when he had finished gargling with indignation, that any so-called destructive critic whose criticisms were merely destructive would soon vanish into oblivion.

And we were kept so busy wondering what happened to the other critics who didn't vanish into oblivion that we never got the hang of his remarks until it was too late to ask for them to be amplified.

But the old desire to try the effect of blue litmus paper on destructive criticism got us again when we stumbled on a piece from Mr. Bertram Matthewson, of Forest Gate, E.7, among the hundred and one whiffs of brimstone and sulphur, delivered in asbestos bags and guaranteed to spoil our morning coffee, because we had allowed Cedric Belfrage to say that our far-flung Empire was all right as far as it went; the trouble was that when it was flung it did not go far enough.

Mr. Belfrage lives in a world of superficial people," says Mr. Matthewson, "of actors and actresses, of shadowy figures on a silver screen, of mummers posturing on a stage—and of the box-office. He has not one qualification to write on any subject of weight, except possibly his negative quality of destructive criticism.

"The final and complete reason why Mr. Belfrage has a wrong slant on world politics is that he writes only from the box-office angle. When writing of such things he should approach the subject from an angle that is dear to every Briton's heart—fair play.

"Is it fair that Britain should 'possess' a quarter of the world's resources, largely undeveloped, when other countries need those raw materials and could develop those empty lands?

"It is no more fair than the burning of wheat when people are starving; the idleness of bootmakers when children go barefoot. O, Spirit of Kipling! How admirable a sentiment was there, how noble an ideal, how powerful a force if only you had made it embrace the whole world instead of one small sect. But your teaching is good; let us apply it ourselves to the world.

"For the future of the world lies in Britain's hands. Her colonial possessions are a danger unto herself and the peace of the world. Economists have gone crazy; so we must make the first steps towards reconstruction. . . ."

Having thus so nobly unburdened himself, Mr. Matthewson stalks off to some other jousting ground ready to tilt with his ready wit where the fancy takes him, leaving us still juggling with the problem of what really makes a critic destructive. For the more we look at Mr. Matthewson and at Mr. Belfrage the harder it is for us to find the difference.

Let us, therefore, leave politicians, who have no more sense of direction than a runaway firework, to listen to Mr. Dan R.

Cormack, of Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire, proving that real men go on laughing while the others merely blubber about the whim-whams that keep them in a lather.

Among his other duties, Mr. Cormack has the job of engaging casual labourers for a firm of Grimsby fish exporters. The other morning he set to work a youngster who, never before having been employed as a casual labourer, had not brought his unemployment cards with him.

"After warning him that I would have to have his cards stamped next day, I let him go off to his job," says Mr. Cormack, "and later in the day, when I went around the ship advising several of the men that I might need them again next day, the young man came to me asking whether we should be busy.

"'I don't think so,' I replied, 'but you'd better bring your cards along.'

"'And should I bring my dart board, too,' he adds.

"After that I set him on for a week," continues Mr. Cormack, "for the laughter caused by his remark deserved a reward."

We must, also, mention the story told us by Mr. Ronald Squires, of Bishop's Stortford, who with several other motor-minded people was watching a large beefy driver swinging the handle of a tiny car.

The handle flew round and round and the motorist panted, but there was no sign of life in the engine of the car; still the handle flew round as though the man would never tire. Eventually he stopped, straightened his great back painfully, and glared balefully at the watching motorists.

Then up spoke a chauffeur. With a disarming smile and a polite salute, he asked: "How far does it go, sir, when it is wound up?" You're telling us?

# For Your Amusement

CLUES ACROSS

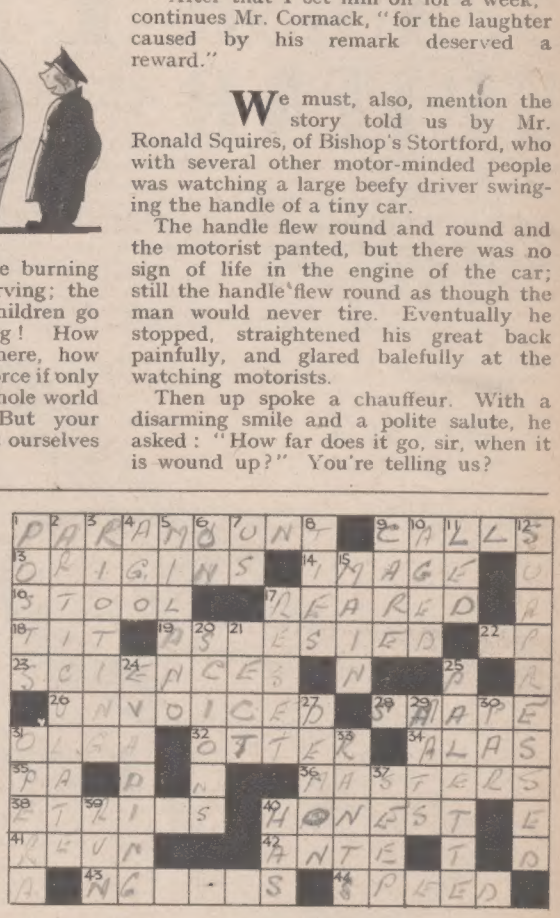
1. Superior to all others.
9. These may be visits.
13. Beginnings.
14. Golden calf for instance.
16. Seat for milkmaid, perhaps.
17. Rose on hind legs.
18. Small name for small bird.
19. Valued.
22. May represent you.
23. Learned pursuits.
26. This remains unsaid.
28. Phase gives form.
31. Gaol for the lady.
32. River animal.
34. Expressive of grief.
35. Baby's father from 1 across.
36. Young misters, perhaps.
38. Morals.
40. Sincere.
41. Restrain or control.
42. Neat so signifies precedence.
43. A way out.
44. Despatch quickly.

CLUES DOWN

1. Stops or may be positions.
2. Distinct and clear.
3. Making a hullabaloo we may say.
4. Time past.
5. No mail for Italian city.
6. Word of position from 40 across.
7. You and I are included here.
8. These may bind.
9. Race into consideration.
10. Of many years.
11. Sometimes by the nose.
12. Crushed or concealed.
15. Quantity of matter in a body.
17. To arrange again.
20. Twigs for grafters.
21. Group of people with particular views.
24. Avoiding or dodging.
25. Artists' implement.
27. Evil spirit.
29. Coverings.
30. State of equality.
31. With music, of course.
33. Uses extravagant language.
37. Percolate slowly.
39. To hasten.
40. Appropriate diminution of 29 implies possession.

ETERNAL TRIME
VENEER PREMIERS
ELAPSED UPPERS
RECAST STRENGTH
STY EITHER E
C ME LASSITUDE
MODESTLY SAILED
OPENS N U LANE
DELTA EASE RARE
E A YESTER A N
LAYS SERE SAID

*Solution to last week's puzzle*

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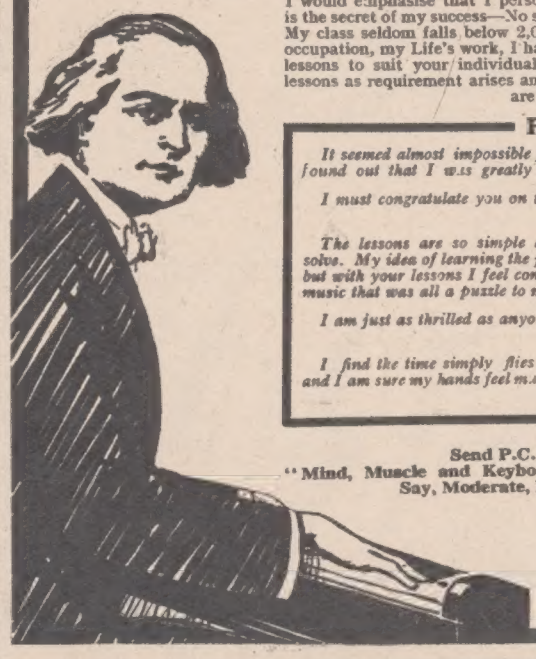

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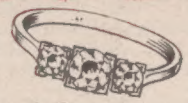

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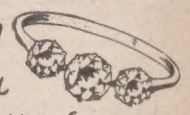

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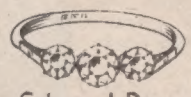

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